# The Virtue of No Choice: The Lived Experiences of Mathematically Inclined Senior High School Students Taking An Alternative Strand

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**ABSTRACT**

This study was focused on exploring the experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insight of mathematically inclined students who took an alternative strand in senior high school. This qualitative study used phenomenological research design to delve on the lived experiences of the participants. The data were gathered using an In-depth Interview and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The participants of this study were the eight alumni of New Kapatagan National High School who proceeded with math related undergraduate programs. They were selected using a purposive sampling technique. As part of the ethical consideration, the identities of the participants were kept confidential and anonymous. Furthermore, the findings revealed that their challenges were hard time understanding lessons, did not experience struggles, different learning environment, and lack of understanding. These difficulties were coped by always asking questions, doing research, asking help from teachers. Insights taken by this study were learning to do research is important, support system is crucial, prioritize study, stay focused, communication is needed. The result revealed that nature dominates over gap in learning. This means that when one has a talent in mathematics, learning it is easier.

**Keywords:** mathematically inclined students, mathematics, experiences, challenges, coping mechanism, insights, phenomenology, Philippines

**INTRODUCTION**
**The Problem and Its Background**
Students are restrained to pursue their desired programs in senior high school in many remote areas due to financial constraints. The senior high school is a byproduct of the K-12 curriculum. The K–12 curriculum aims to foster lifelong learners, give students enough time to master concepts and skills, and prepare them for postsecondary education, middle skills development, the workforce, and entrepreneurship. Upon completing the Junior High School program, learners may choose from the tracks in the Senior High School offered in the K-12 program: Academic, Technical-Vocational-Livelihood, and Sports and Arts. Moreover, learners must align their tracks in preparation for their undergraduate degree as designed in the K-12 curriculum. However, situations in the remote areas show the contrary as students compromise to enroll in the programs available in the school, setting aside their preferred track in senior high school (Ampofo, 2020).

In Australia, Smith and Johnson (2019) studied the stories of high-achieving seniors who chose to study humanities or arts despite being very good at math. The study found that their choices were not only based on grades or skills, but also on deeper things like their interests, dreams for the future, support from friends, and sometimes the limits of what their school could offer. These Australian students show that academic choices often go beyond ability, just like students in remote areas who take available strands like Animation out of necessity. They show what students think about their choices, values, and the world around them. This also changes how they see themselves as students and how they picture their future.

In the Philippines, particularly in the locality of Upper Malubog, Manticao, Misamis Oriental, a study was conducted to explore the factors affecting access to senior high school education, and the finding shows that the students' access to senior high education was impacted mostly by economic factors (Jumamil, 2024). This means that the student's decision to take an alternative track rather than following their desired track is because many families in barrio schools cannot support sending their children to big schools, and barrio schools only offer the most common track in senior high school.

At New Kapatagan National High School in Casoon, Monkayo, Davao de Oro, students often choose the Animation strand as part of the NC II TVL (Technical Vocational Livelihood) program because it is the only one they can take. Most families depend on farming and cannot afford to send their kids to bigger schools in cities or towns far away, so students must make do with what the school offers. This program teaches you how to make moving pictures using drawings, computer graphics, or other media. It can lead to creative jobs. However, not all students are interested in this field, and some feel stuck or disconnected, leading to low participation, frequent absences, and a drop in grades. This is part of a bigger problem in remote schools where there aren't many chances for students to learn, and new things tend to happen in cities, leaving rural students behind.

Hence, this study is significant in today's time because there are still many students who need attention, and this problem leaves many students' dreams unrealistic. The need to conduct this study today is significant in understanding child labor thoroughly.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences, struggles, coping mechanisms, and insights of the participants. The participants in this study were the eight senior high school alumna who were mathematically inclined who took an alternative track in senior highs school from New Kapatagan National High School in Casoon, Monkayo, Davao De Oro. The researcher used an in-depth interview to gather the data. In many remote areas in the country, exploring this problem is empirical to understand the lived experiences of the senior high school students who take an alternative strand because understanding their experiences and struggles gives authorities perspective to their motivation to pursue education.

## Review of Related Literature

The following related literature and studies are taken into consideration since they are sources of information regarding the discussions of the findings of this study.

**Technical Vocational Livelihood Education as Alternative Strand.** Education plays a critical role in shaping students' futures by equipping them with skills necessary for employment and lifelong learning. According to the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, the government aims to provide quality education that ensures productivity, competitiveness, and social transformation. One of the pathways that align with this goal is the Technical-Vocational Livelihood (TVL) track, which is designed for students who wish to specialize in practical skills relevant to various industries. Gonzales and Digo (2024)

emphasized that the TVL track includes strands such as Agri-Fishery Arts, Home Economics, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), and Industrial Arts, all of which prepare students for career opportunities that may or may not require national certification from the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

For many students, particularly those facing financial constraints, the TVL track presents a viable alternative that ensures employability without requiring higher education. However, this choice is often dictated by necessity rather than preference, reinforcing the broader issue that students frequently choose educational paths based on economic and logistical limitations rather than personal aspiration.

**Senior High School Program.** Although raising the standard of education for global competency seems like a good idea, the government would find it difficult to put into practice. The senior high school curriculum also equips students with the skills they need for the workforce. Some Filipino financial experts believe K–12 education is crucial for the country, but it is not ready yet. Cruz (2010) asserts that the people's education level determines the nation's destiny. The K–12 Senior High School program is thought to improve the compatibility of Filipino professionals and students worldwide.

It is thought that the extra years in high school will give students ample opportunity to learn concepts and skills, become lifelong learners, and prepare for middle-level and high school graduation. It will only get worse if the number of years is increased; it won't get any more comfortable. In reaction to these pessimistic ideas, Luistro (2014) said, "Indeed, Department of Education is in short supply for K-12 implementation, but the government's education budget can solve the issue." There is no harm in a society that prioritizes its people's education because education is an essential element of an effective society; Luistro (2014) added (SeamoInnotech, 2010).

**Experiences of mathematically inclined students who took alternative strand.** Research indicates that forced course enrollment can adversely affect students' psychological well-being. A study by Johnson et al. (2015) revealed that students who take courses against their will are more likely to experience stress, anxiety, and depression. The stressors include the pressure to perform in subjects they dislike and the loss of control over their educational journey. These psychological effects can have long-lasting impacts, influencing students' self-esteem and overall mental health.

Parents choose a school for many reasons, and past studies have classified these into various groups. Taylor (2001) grouped the list of parental school choice reasons into four general domains: Ideological (for example, religious), Geographical distance (for example, proximity to home), Quality of education (for example, academic performance), and Non-educational characteristics (for example, school population).

Even as the strong push for school choice continues in many countries, researchers argue that choice increases the risk of stratification and segregation by race and class (Goldhaber,2000). Parents with higher socioeconomic status, income, and educational attainment are more likely to make their choice and send their kids to a similar school.

Caucasian parents avoided schools with a high minority proportion of non-Caucasian students (Saporito,2003). Weiher and Tedin (2002) found that parents who transferred their child from traditional government schools chose to send their child to a school with a higher percentage (11-14%) of students from similar racial groups. They discovered that, on average, black students were transferred to a school with 15% more black students than their previous school when comparing the differences in the student demographic composition of the transferred schools.

**Struggles in taking an alternative strand.** Children's academic choices are still heavily influenced by their parents, who frequently steer them toward traditionally lucrative fields like engineering or medicine (Cheng & Lam, 2013). This pressure can be especially strong in societies where family expectations are strongly embedded. Parents may specifically encourage their kids to pursue particular academic specialties by highlighting these occupations' prestige and financial stability. This direct pressure could cause the student less autonomy and stress (Kim & Park, 2016). Cultural stories emphasizing specific professions or the behavior set by other family members can also help to transmit indirect parental expectations. Sharma et al. (2017) claim that although subtle, this influence can be equally powerful in guiding students' choices.

Parental pressure ranges depending on the cultural setting. Meeting parent expectations is more crucial in some societies since group projects and family ties are highly valued (Jang & Kim, 2018). Students often feel obligated to follow their parents' directions in these circumstances. In many Asian societies, filial piety is basic for family dynamics. Because they usually view their children's success as a mirror of their own, parents have more expectations for their academic and career paths (Park & Kim, 2015). Parental expectations still affect academic decisions even if Western societies value individualism and personal preference more highly. However, the pressure may be less evident since parents stress direction and support above clear coercion (Smith & Johnson, 2014).

The pressure to live up to parental expectations might seriously affect students' general well-being and academic choices. Research indicates that students who feel under pressure from their parents to follow specific professions may develop increased stress, anxiety, and unmotivation (Liu & Wang, 2018). The pressure to live up to parental expectations can cause stress and anxiety to climb. If students feel they they cannot follow their passions or make their own decisions, their well-being could suffer (Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2014). When students choose courses or professions more based on parental expectations than on their own interests, they may discover that their academic and career paths are not in line. Komarraju et al. (2014) claim that this could lead to lower academic performance, less involvement, and more likelihood of dropout or major change-of-interest.

The status framework created by society trends shapes intellectual and career choices. Though they are seen as more prestigious, such as those in business, engineering, law, or medicine, students may decide to pursue some professions despite their interests ( Lee & Sohn, 2017). Early influences on academic decisions can be those of society's inclination for specific professions. For families and students alike, social status is a major driver. Fields with high financial and social status attract more students, usually at the expense of other professions that would more fit their interests (Sharma et al., 2018). Focusing on elite professions may cause students to select academic courses more depending on social expectations than personal passion. Lack of intrinsic drive can compromise academic performance and satisfaction (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019).

Collectivist societies give the success of the family or community overall top priority. Students are thus greatly motivated to follow career routes that the general public values (Kim & Kang, 2018). This means that even if they are not first choices, students may choose courses that follow these cultural standards (Park & Lee, 2016). In collectivist societies, cultural standards may make students feel less independent since they give more importance on satisfying social and family expectations. As such, personal objectives and cultural expectations might collide (Liang & Liu, 2020).

Students who choose their courses in line with social conventions may be less intrinsically motivated, which could reduce their involvement and academic performance, claims Smith and Johnson (2017). This

could affect their general academic background as well as job satisfaction.Under pressure to fit in with cultural and society standards, students may suffer more stress and burnout trying to satisfy expectations that might not line with their own objectives (Wang & Liu, 2018). Stress related negative effects including dropout and mental health issues could come from this (Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2014).

Students who are forced to enroll in courses that do not fit their interests or aptitudes may experience increased stress and anxiety (Baumeister & Leary, 2010). Stress like this could affect their general well-being and academic performance (Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2014.). When students perform poorly in classes they are not interested in, they may lose confidence and self-esteem, which would set off a vicious cycle of poor academic performance and emotional suffering (Martens et al., 2010).

**Coping Mechanisms of students who took an alternative strand.** Because they are essential to the kind of work one desires, personal interests have a big impact on career decisions. Individuals will put in a great deal of effort and commitment to reaching their professional objectives. Also, the student's interest will encourage them to participate more in what they are passionate about (Abdo & Majid, 2016).

According to the study of Nyamwange (2016), student interest plays a vital role in a person's professional choice. According to numerous studies, interest is one of the primary determinants of career choice. Ahmed (2014) stated in his study that students know their interests are the main force when selecting their major. According to the study by Bubic (2014), students' natural or initial interest in a particular area of future study frequently influenced their choice.

In addition, the study by Sierra (2020) concluded that the most essential thing that students consider when choosing their senior high school track is what they are interested in. Students were therefore more driven to perform well academically. The same findings were found in the study of Anuada (2017), where she revealed that personality or interest is the factor having the most influence in choosing their track and strand, and therefore concluded that it plays an essential role in choosing the right career.

Contrary to the previous citation, the study by Rio et al. (2022) did not find any significant influence when deciding what senior high school track and strand they should choose. The findings of similar studies demonstrate that a learner's interest influences their choice in a different way.

One of the things that students think about the most is the possibility of employment. Alongside their interest in a particular profession, it was discovered that students are motivated to take their courses because of employment opportunities (Kunnen, 2013). However, students choose a particular career for other reasons besides interest and the likelihood of landing a job.

The study of Bakar et al. (2014) states that learners choose their careers depending on what benefits are included in a job, such as financial remuneration, job security, and satisfaction. A similar study was conducted in Switzerland, which shows that youth learners consider accessibility when choosing jobs, choosing jobs near them instead of those they prefer (Atitsogbe et al., 2018). The study by Choi and Kim (2013) shows the same result, where Korean students focus on the accessibility of their job.

Students must go through a complicated process while choosing a career in which they need to consider various factors, including job opportunities (Santric-Milicevic et al., 2014). The study of Princes et al. (2023) showed that job opportunity is the second-most influential factor in choosing a senior high school stream. The study by Japitan et al. (2015) showed that learners know the job opportunities surrounding them. However, it was discovered that learners were only marginally impacted by the aforementioned factor, and while they do not ignore it, they only give job opportunities less thought when choosing a course.

The word "career" has Latin and French roots. Its simplest definition is given by Geciki (2002) as; the occupational, commercial or industrial activity that a person may adopt during his educational life or in some other part or till his death. Redman and Wilkinson (2001) clarifies career as the application of a person's cognition and capabilities, providing command over profession, timely work expertise and a basis of developing and bettering business networks. Individuals chose career planning to pursue the professional objectives, getting informed about upcoming opportunities, their results and their timely evaluations. It is considered to be a beginning in the stages of career choices but still of paramount significance. People prefer the career that could provide them sound basis for an improved standard of living (Cavus et.al., 2015). Individual career planning is a strategy for how a person would advance in his line of work. At the organizational level, it discusses the personal development quadrant and promotional aspects. So briefly career planning is the process whereby the individual himself or his organization helps in pursuing his growth objectives in conformity with his expertise in the area, capabilities and aims (Bayraktaroğlu, 2011).

Classifying the two factors that influence people's career decisions as psychological and social is possible. A person's social ties, parents, family, history, and other aspects of their surroundings are social factors. Psychological factors can be an individual's perception, cognitive and effective intentions, beliefs, ideas, personality, and assessments related to forthcoming business environment (Ozen, 2011).

Various investigations into the students' lives have produced varying conclusions. The results of a quantitative study conducted in central Pennsylvania by taking rural young adults and adolescents as respondents indicated that influence exerted by an individual's family, society, state of economy, and their interpretation of better job and financial constraints were major reasons that can impact their career selection (Ferry; 2006). A systematic review of 600 articles published in 2003- 2013 of low-income countries conducted by Puerto's EB (2013) determined intrinsic factors amongst medical students (age, sex, rural background) and extrinsic factors (salaries, governmental institutions, medical institutes reputation, training techniques) influence a medical student's decision to choose a career in primary care; and to establish that some factors were different among students in high-, middle and low-income countries.

Studies conducted in different countries different cultures can sum up with different relationships among variables selected for the study; for example, in Kenya personality types and interest in subject is a factor that impacts lot on making career choices by the students, but if we look at this similar kind of study conducted in South Africa where demographics and culture are totally different it, revealed that the financial factors impact on career choices of students, (Abrahams et. al., 2015). Zing (2007) research concluded that personal liking of an individual towards a particular subject contributes to his career selection decision.

In the study of Shertzer and Stone (2003), the authors found that interest depicted by students in some subjects will mostly lead to better examination performance and selection of profession in the same direction. The work of Alexander et al (2011) on the examination of students enrolled in the disciplines of information technology found that liking of the subject has chief significance when looking at the factors contributing to professional direction adopted by students. In addition, An individual's inclination towards a certain field or subject, his or her preference for a particular job, and the compatibility of his or her personality with the chosen professions are all significant factors that influence a person's career path, according to Edward and Quinter's (2012) research.

It is clear that personality and interest in a particular field of work are related. According to a study done on students at the Institution of Technology (IOT) in Ireland, personality differences also affect the careers that students choose. According to statistics, adolescents drop out of courses and subjects three times more frequently than they do from universities. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) has shown that this is due to poor career choices made at the outset. One of the main factors, according to Clement (2014), is when a person's personality doesn't match a course or career. Personality is important when choosing a career because an individual's motivation, fulfillment, and productivity are all directly related to their personality. The most dangerous source of discontent and the ultimate cause of stress and career failure is a lack of fit.

Additionally, a study by Rebecca et al. (2016) on 399 Kenyan students found a connection between personality types and career choice. The majority of students expressed satisfaction with the courses they had chosen prior to enrolling in college, suggesting that students would be more satisfied and successful in their studies and future careers if they chose a suitable career path. However, when students alter their course section, it is a sign that their subject selection did not align with their future professional goals.

As a result, it generates the likelihood of the current state of the association between personality types and career choice among Kenyan undergraduate students. According to the study, undergraduate students' career choices and personality types are significantly correlated. According to Christine's (2005) study, which involved 770 students in South Africa, the relationship between personality traits and career choices appears to be weaker than in other nations due to cultural and environmental changes. The Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF) and the Interest Questionnaire (INQ) were filled out by 770 respondents. Although these were minor shifts, partial correlations suggested that race and gender might have an impact on these relationships.

Prospective Employment Opportunities for some people, advancing their careers is a continuous process; they choose to take on various jobs by selecting from the market's available positions. Every person undertakes the procedure of choosing opportunities subjective by many factors, context they live in, personal aptitudes, and educational skills (Bandura et al, 2001).

Azizzadeh et al (2003) studies based on medical science students found that career opportunities in combination with prestige are the most important factor in the decision-making process of surgical career selection. This choice is crucial in setting students on a career path that opens and closes opportunities, despite the common belief that family and community are the only factors that contribute to workplace readiness.

Parents and bursaries were identified as the two most important sources of financial support for 721 undergraduate students in the study. The results also showed that, in addition to professor visits (for career counseling), predicted future career benefits, such as opportunities for increased future earnings and promotions, were factors that influenced undergraduate students' career choices in South Africa. Financial limitations that people face when choosing a career are another concept or topic that is frequently covered in studies. Kerka (2000) claims that piece of information utilized by individuals and financial resources at their disposal significantly interfere in individuals' decision-making process of career selection.

Moreover, Ushure (2014) lectures indicated that limited finances available to students will negatively in their preferences of profession selection. The availability of funds would limit their aspirations to specialize in well-known fields like engineering, obtaining a doctorate, etc. He further contended that, despite their high expense, children from low-status families occasionally go on to pursue high-status

careers. This is because their parents want them to experience the things in life that they haven't been able to because they are not wealthy enough.

**Insights gain from the experiences in taking Alternative Strand.** Recent studies have shown that intrinsic motivation is a critical factor in academic success. Students who are enrolled in courses against their will often experience a lack of intrinsic motivation, leading to reduced engagement and lower academic performance. According to Brown and Smith (2012), these students demonstrate a tendency for absenteeism, lack of participation, and poor grades, largely due to the absence of personal interest in the subject matter. This decreased motivation creates a negative feedback loop, exacerbating academic underperformance.

Taking courses against one's can significantly affect a student's career trajectory. Research by Martinez and Lee (2013) found that students in this position often end up pursuing careers that do not align with their interests or passions. These students are less likely to pursue further studies in these subjects and more likely to switch majors or drop out. Such outcomes can lead to feelings of regret and hindered career progress.

World Health Organization identifies Youth as individuals aged 15-24 years (World Health Organization, 2023). There are currently 1.2 billion young people in the world, the largest generation in history. Approximately 90% of the world's youth, who make up a significant portion of the population, live in developing countries. Africa, the youngest continent in the world, is predicted to have 830 million young people by 2050. As the number of young people worldwide continues to rise, youth empowerment has become a critical cross-cutting issue for achieving all of the Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2023). For the 2018 school year, 258 million children and teenagers are not enrolled in school, according to data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics estimates that 62 million people are lower secondary school age and 138 million are upper secondary school age. In contrast to the about 8% of sixth graders who do not graduate and enter seventh grade, 18% of junior high school students in the Philippines in 2018 did not move on to senior high school (Cervantes, 2018).

During the 20th century under US rule, the Philippines absorbed the American system of formal education (Tandora, 2003). In 2012, the Philippines introduced the "K to 12" Program, a comprehensive reform of basic education. Since then, the Philippines has been bringing secondary education up to international standards and has placed a high priority on kindergarten. The updated curriculum would give Senior High School (SHS) graduates the competencies, skills, and values needed for both lifelong learning and employment, according to the Department of Education, which is part of the nation's K12 program legislation. For seniors in grade 12, or senior high school, there are work immersion programs that can help them apply what they have learned in class to their future careers and acquaint themselves with the workplace and the nature of their future jobs. The two extra years would have given students more experience in college life, they would also be prepared to start their own business or find a job without having a college degree (Arturo & Arturo, 2020).

According to Ducanes and Ocampo (2020), raising youth school attendance has been a top priority in all international initiatives, including the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that followed. Youth education is directly impacted by two of the SDGs. (Source: United Nations). According to SDG Goal 4.4, nations should "significantly increase the number of youth and adults with relevant skills, including technical and leadership abilities." This has a direct connection to entrepreneurship, good jobs, and vocational skills for employment. This relates to SDG Goal 8.6, which calls on nations to "significantly" lower poverty by 2020 and lower the percentage

of young people without jobs, education, or training. The K-12 Education Program is a new curriculum in the Philippines that prepares students for tertiary education and shows that they are capable of being lifelong learners by advancing their knowledge and skills across multiple subjects. Nevertheless, there are a number of problems with its application.

According to study findings, students perceive the new curriculum as a significant burden, citing the lengthier high school years, lack of support, and learning materials as the primary challenges. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2014), early marriage, family issues, lack of personal interest, high educational costs, and employment are the main causes of school nonparticipation. About 533,000 high school-age youth, 68% of whom were male and 32% of whom were female, were not enrolled in 2014, according to PSA APIS 2014. Central Luzon had the largest percentage of non-enrollees out of the seventeen regions.The ability of young people to envision and plan for their future is impacted by their lack of participation in secondary education. The importance of education for the growth of the individual and the nation cannot be denied. This is true because a nation cannot prosper unless its citizens are highly educated. Since people have utilized education as a socio-economic development tool, it is viewed as a tool for social development. One of the main goals of national resource allocation is to enhance educational procedures and student performance. The value of education in today's society cannot be overstated. According to UNESCO (2015), a society's level of civilization and discipline increases in direct proportion to the educational attainment of its citizens.

According to Yeboah Appiagyei et al. (2014), there is no doubt that environmental factors affect students' academic performance. Infrastructure and services, pollution, a healthy environment, and environmental hazards are the three categories of environmental factors that are discussed, with quality of life serving as a mediator. It is claimed that access to environmental services and infrastructure affects academic performance.Given that the vast majority of people in the nation reside in rural areas and on islands, living in remote locations is one of the most plausible explanations. Residents may be unaware of programs offering free tuition due to the remoteness of a place. Like other developing nations throughout the world, it has been demonstrated that they have increased their investment in rural regions, notably in literacy, primary education, vocational training, and livelihood programs (Shrestha, 2007). Environmental aspects of the school, such as the facilities provided learning materials in school are said to have an impact on dropout as they impact how students access education (MOE, 2008).

Large class sizes, low academic standards, a hostile learning environment, and strained relationships with teachers are some of the contextual factors that have been shown to contribute to student dropout, along with low socioeconomic class and a rural upbringing. According to Bridgeland et al. (2007) and Morison (2006), dropouts themselves give a variety of reasons for quitting school, including obligations to their families, their jobs, and their studies. Among tenth graders in 2002, the most common reasons for dropping out were "missed too many school days" (44%), "thought it would be easier to get a GED" (41%), "getting poor grades/failing school" (38%), "did not like school" (37%), and "could not keep up with schoolwork" (32%).

Furthermore, students' attitudes, values, and beliefs affect both their behavior and academic performance. Students' motivation, values, goals, and various self-perceptions about their identities and abilities are examples of these psychological components. Due to the biological and developmental stages that students experience, these factors change over time. For many students, early adolescence and the emergence of sexuality are among the most important and often the most difficult periods. When they start junior high school, some early adolescents experience a significant drop in their academic performance as well as a

decline in their interest in learning, internal drive, and self-confidence. Negative responses to school increase as well, as youngsters become more prone to test anxiety, learned helplessness, and self-consciousness that impedes concentration on learning tasks (Eccles, 1999).

**Academic Reasons for School Choice**. Academic motivations play a significant role in achieving academic success and are a major concern for all parents. Bossetti (2004) asserts that the majority of parents prioritize academic factors when choosing specific schools or school types because they believe their kids will thrive academically and have a better educational experience there. Academic reasons were ranked as the most significant factor by parents across all school types (public and private) (lower-than-high school-educated parents 48.6%, high school-educated parents 55%, and college-educated parents 53.1%), according to empirical evidence found by Elacqua et al. (2005). Schneider and Buckley (2002) looked at how parents searched for schools on an educational website and discovered that, generally speaking, parents searched for schools with higher academic performance (higher reading and math scores). Put another way, parents stopped sending their children to schools that did not perform well academically.

According to other studies, academic factors play a major role in parents' school choices (Denessen et al., 2005; Weiher and Tedin, 2002). Some academic reasons include the quality of education, while others center on academic achievement, which parents associate with smaller class sizes (Kleitz et al., 2000), good exam scores (Solomon, 2003), and individual attention (Denessen et al., 2005). According to Elacqua et al. (2005), nearly all parent groups with varying educational backgrounds (high school, below-high school, and college) cited the significance of educational quality when choosing a school. This study discovered that the most significant factor among the 17 reasons for school choice was educational quality. Exam scores serve as a gauge of educational quality. According to a UK study on parental preference and school choice, 64% of parents said that one of the factors influencing their choice of school was a strong performance on school exams (Collins and Snell, 2000).

**Influence of Peers in the Career Choice of the Students.** Our immediate peer group is essential, particularly in social situations. Peer relationships have both positive and negative effects. Positive effects include the development of social-emotional skills like empathy and cooperation, while negative effects include poor social-emotional development brought on by deviant peer processes. Similarly, decision-making affects students as well, and picking a career is no exception. A study by Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) found that, when it comes to career path, peer influence ranks second most crucial after parental influence. The study's analysis of their semi-structured interviews indicates that students choose a career path with friends more comfortably and securely. This result shows how very much their friends' mere presence can affect their choices.

The study of Koech et al. (2016) found that a student's career choice is much influenced by their peers, especially if those friends are mentoring or counseling them and so supporting their choice. Along with parental decisions and student aptitude, college course choice clearly shows peer influence. Nevertheless, among the three elements, peer pressure has the least influence on the course of study chosen in colleges (Dupan et al., 2019). Choosing their college course is less difficult in their life than the decision a senior in high school must make on their track and strand. A 2019 Moneva and Malbas study claims that senior high school track choice is much influenced by peer pressure. They found that peers affect students' preferred paths, thus choosing a senior high school track becomes more difficult. They defined it as "one of the biggest challenges" to a student's decision-making since it complicates choices.

**SHS Program and School Choice.** Many socioeconomic elements often affect the choice of school, so limiting students' possibilities instead of allowing complete freedom of choice. Many research highlights the restrictions that affect students' decisions, particularly those of low-income backgrounds. Moreover, Rosvall et al. (2018) examined the significance of financial resources in school choice, stressing the fact that wealthy students are more likely to enrol in the programs of their choice free from consideration for outside constraints including lodging. On the other hand, less fortunate students have great challenges since they have to consider housing and related expenses while selecting a study environment. This financial restriction greatly limits their options, thus their decision is more of a need than a choice. In a similar line, Lokoyel (2019) underlined how important public transportation accessibility and geographic proximity are in determining students' preferred schools. Students who live near educational institutions or have easy access to transportation are more likely to attend institutions that might not exactly fit their academic goals but are logistically practical. This helps to explain why students often show up for class out of need rather than deliberate choice.Ryan and Heise (2001) also support the assertion that parents routinely send their children to school despite the lack of programs. This suggests that rather than academic interests, outside restrictions shape their decision-making process.

Many families cannot afford private or distant universities that might provide better academic programs, thus they choose schools within their socioeconomic level. Beach et al. (2019) gave this discussion fresh direction by tying social and geographical mobility together. Students from lower-income backgrounds are disproportionately impacted, they found, by the social and financial stress of leaving their university. Their financial load makes it challenging for these students to migrate for better educational possibilities; it limits their choices for colleges that would fit their career objectives.Ultimately, the body of research now under publication highlights how often students, especially those from underprivileged backgrounds, select schools not because they want but rather because of logistical, financial, and geographic restrictions.

## Theoretical Lens

This study in grounded in the Constructivism Learning Theory developed by Jean Piaget in 1936. Piaget says that people learn by having experiences and interacting with the world around them. Learning is not just about getting information; it is also about making sense of what you already know and what you go through. In this study, students assigned to a strand such as Animation, not by preference but due to restricted choices, undergo an individual process of interpreting that circumstance. They learn and grow from their experiences, whether they are good or bad. The problems they face, such as not being interested, comparing themselves to others, or not knowing what their future holds, are not just obstacles; they are also chances for them to learn and change their minds about what they are doing.

The Constructivism Learning Theory elucidates how these students navigate and derive significance from a trajectory they may not have initially desired. Some people may adapt by finding new interests or hidden strengths, while others may have a hard time but still learn important things about themselves and the world of work. They learn through experience when they deal with problems by focusing on practical skills, building support systems with peers, or rethinking what success means to them. This theory also helps us understand what teachers and schools do. By understanding how students make sense of their situations, teachers can give better advice and make learning spaces that help students grow, even when things aren't going perfectly. Constructivism teaches us that every learning experience is unique, and even difficulties can serve as significant foundations for future achievement.
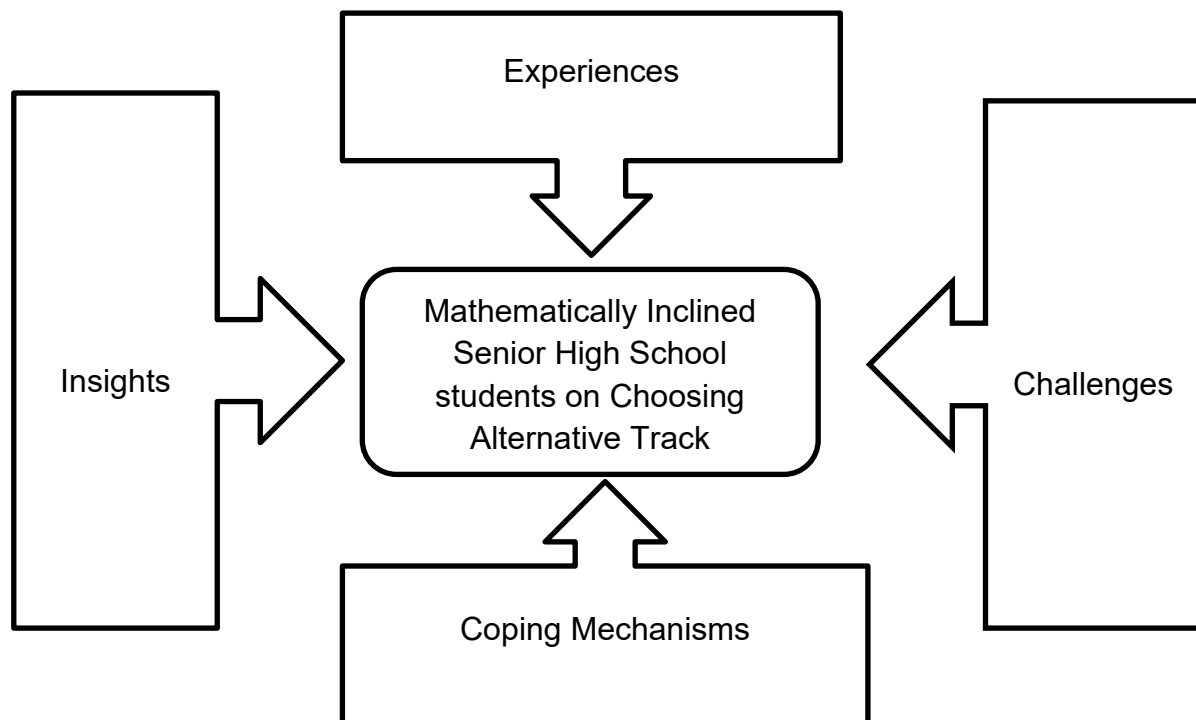
**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**

**Research Questions**

This study sought to find the experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights of senior high school students enrolled in an alternative strand for the 2024–2025 academic year. The researcher was challenged to answer the following questions as a road map for this effort.

1. What are the experiences of the students who took an alternative strand in senior high school?
2. What are the challenges of the students who took an alternative strand in senior high school?
3. What are the coping mechanisms of the students who took an alternative strand in senior high school?
4. What are the insights of the students who took an alternative strand in senior high school?

**Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

This study explored the experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms and insights of the senior high school students taking an alternative strand who are alumni of New Kapatagan National High School. The participants of the study were the eight students who took an alternative strand due to problems in finances and those students who have not pursued their preferred strand because of various reasons. The data that were taken from them were gathered using the In-depth interview (IDI).

Face-to-face interviews with those who agreed to take part in the study were the main technique used to collect data. To ensure that every bit of information was precisely captured and transcribed, the researcher used an audio recorder for each participant interview.

**Significance of the Study**

The following individuals are the beneficiaries of the study.

**Learners**. The findings of the study would inspire the students to study hard despite the challenges encountered and to invest time and effort in education. The findings would also enlighten the minds of these learners towards a positive outlook for them to succeed.

**Teachers**. The findings of the study would be beneficial to the teachers because it would encourage them to help these students choose courses to attain their dreams by teaching them the knowledge and skills for

life. Inspire the teachers to look for better approaches and strategies fitted for the students choosing a course.

**School Administrators**. The findings of this study would be beneficial to the school administrators because it would help them in their function to create policies for students. This would also help school administrators to understand the students in their situations and their motivation to pursue education.

**Parents**. The findings of the study would be beneficial for parents as they shed light on the challenges their children face in such situations, helping parents understand and support their children better.

**Future Researchers**. The study's conclusions would act as a manual for researchers in the future who wish to conduct similar investigations and take into account additional factors that could support the findings.

## METHODS

This chapter covers the research design, the research location, the researcher's role, research participants, data collection processes, data analysis, trustworthiness and credibility, and ethical considerations.

### Research Design

This study was qualitative using a phenomenological approach. This study explored the lived experiences of the senior high school students who took an alternative strand. Qualitative research method is used to explore the phenomenon under investigation. This approach, as detailed by Creswell (2014), allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives within their natural settings. This helps to clarify what it is like for students to take courses against their choice and direct support and course-taking strategies that are sustainable as phenomenological study described the lived experiences of the students (Creswell, 2009).

Moreover, the study investigated the students' real experiences to try and comprehend the different facets of their engagement in attending a program different from their preferred strand. Students were interviewed using an in-depth interview in order to gather data for the study. Finding patterns and themes in qualitative data were the task of data analysis. This made it easier to identify the many viewpoints and motivators driving a student's unwillingness to drop a course. Prioritizing ethical issues included getting consent, maintaining confidentiality, and abiding by ethical rules. A narrative format highlighting the selected themes was used to present the findings.

### Research Locale

The research was conducted at New Kapatagan National High School (NKNHS) in Barangay Casoon, Monkayo, Davao de Oro—approximately 30 kilometers from the provincial center, Nabunturan, and 120 kilometers from Davao City. Monkayo, established as a municipality on September 4, 1954, under Presidential Executive Order No. 65, comprises 21 barangays and is home to 37 public and private elementary schools, 15 secondary schools, and one college. NKNHS, a public secondary school under the Department of Education, is known as "the home of nature prodigies" and sits in an agricultural town rich in bananas, coconuts, and rice. Historically, Monkayo traces its roots to 1879, originally called Moncayo by Jesuit priest Fr. Saturnino Urios, and was led by the Dibabawon datu Dagohoy. The name is believed to be inspired by the kalaw bird and possibly derived from Latin or Italian words referring to a white mountain.

### Role of the Researcher

According to Fink (2000), the role of the researcher includes thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting. Answering the questions of what was studied, why it was

studied, and how it was studied were the goal of thematizing. Using the interview guide questions that were prepared for such, I was able to relate IDI as a data collection technique in this study.

The design stage was the process by which the methodological procedure was developed and prepared. The criteria used to select the participants were taken from the study's objective. These criteria may be based on demographics, but they may also be based on "subtle" criteria like lifestyle characteristics or being in a particular environment. At times, the researcher looked for responses that were similar, and at other times, for responses that were different.

A researcher-made interview guide that detailed the topics discussed during the interview served as the framework for how the interviews were conducted. Open-ended questions were employed to entice participants to give long, detailed answers, and the interview guide contained guidelines on how to formulate targeted questions. Interviews were usually recorded on tape or video. When an interview was videotaped, the visual aspects of the interview were also captured. The next step in the research process was transcription of the recordings. One way to conceptualize these transcription requirements is as a continuum, ranging from a transcript that contains (almost) every sound or silence recorded (stutters, sighs, breaks, etc.) to a transcript that was only permitted to contain sentences that are relevant to specific research questions.

The researcher used the coding system to identify and categorize all of the data during analysis. Following the data's coding, the researcher proceeded to the analysis phase, where the codes were merged into a single comprehensive analysis. The analysis demonstrated the interconnectedness of the codes, which could be viewed as a web of meanings. The researcher used his expertise and experiences as tools to make sense of the material through data interpretation and coding, and he established the coherence and logic of the "meaning structure" in the process.

The validity, reliability, and generalizability of the results were the main concerns of the data analysis verification. Validity is the capacity to ascertain whether the study examined the initial question, generalizability is the capacity to generalize results, and reliability is the consistency of the findings/results. In order to report his findings, the researcher wrote a report. This report should only be considered a data representation.

The researcher performed in-depth in-person interviews with senior high school students who enrolled in an alternative strand at New Kapatagan National High School in Monkayo, Davao de Oro, in accordance with the established norms and guidelines. The interview was conducted by the researcher, while the interview guide questions were administered by a facilitator. I let the participants express their opinions in order to gather more insightful data. After being made aware of the study's objectives and given assurances regarding the privacy, confidentiality, and sensitivity of the information they provided, the participants gave their consent.

**Research Participants**

Purposive sampling was used to select the eight participants, who were all senior high school graduates at New Kapatagan National High School with a mathematical bent and enrolled in an alternative strand. Participants were both male and female, currently enrolled in higher institution. This study was conducted for School Year 2025-2026. Further, the researcher considered their socio-economic status as another criterion of the selection. The responses of the participants were gathered through IDI. Students who were not mathematically inclined and who were not taking alternative strands were excluded from the study. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw their participation at any time without penalty and prejudice.

## Data Gathering Procedure

Before the conduct of the study, the researcher first secured a certification from the ethics committee and the endorsement letter from the dean of graduate school. Then, the researcher sent an email to the Schools Division Superintendent to ask permission to conduct the study as well.

Before the conduct of the interview, the researcher prepared all the equipment that was needed in the face-to-face interview and online video conferencing, including the extra gadgets, money and also a token for the participants so that everything would be ready before it started. During the interview, the data that were gathered were saved in audio recordings and notes were taken for future reference of the different answers of the participants.

During the conduct of the in-depth interview, the researcher used multilingual questions which were English, Tagalog, and Bisaya so that the participants might comfortably answer the different questions regarding the study, but the researcher ensured that the participants had signed the consent form prior the interview.

## Data Analysis

This study uses Thematic Analysis in analyzing the data. In qualitative research, data analysis would entail simplifying the data, searching for trends, and combining the findings. The information was therefore examined using thematic analysis. All of the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed using a computer-based word processing program in order to accomplish this. Using the research questions as a guide and the original concepts from the relevant literature as a guide, each transcription was coded to find relevant themes. As they evolved around the emergent codes, the original categories and themes were revised up until the write-up stage. Along with the reporting of the findings and interpretations, all of the study-related topics were covered in detail through quotations that will be translated from the vernacular. To ensure that all of the meanings and hints were appropriately conveyed in the translations, an expert was asked to comment on the translated quotations by comparing them with the original terms.

## Trustworthiness and Credibility

The criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, all of which will be achieved through several strategies, can be used to evaluate trustworthiness to assure the rigor of qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). For this reason, the researcher conducted the study and interacted with the participants in accordance with the standard.

**Credibility.** The following methods were used in this study to ensure this: consulting experts after creating the interview schedules and making any necessary adjustments; piloting the interview schedules prior to the actual data collection; collecting comprehensive data using open-ended interview questions; verifying members by looking at the data and their interpretations with the selected participants; maintaining interaction with the data by allowing enough time for each interview and using an iterative data coding process; persistent observation through meticulous data collection, meticulous transcriptions, and careful note-taking; and, finally, peer debriefing through conceptual discussions with a different researcher with experience in qualitative research.

**Transferability.** In order to address this, maximum variation sampling and thick description were used, which entailed choosing participants based on a predetermined goal, context, relevant participant characteristics, data collection, analysis, and conclusions. In order to guarantee reliability and confirmability, an audit trail was employed to confirm the findings' impartiality and consistency through continuous feedback from a qualitative researcher both during and after the research process.

**Dependability**. The researcher has the resources needed to confirm data collection, methodological documentation, reliability, and appropriate research decision-making. The data collected from the participants served as the sole basis for the study's conclusions. Every interpretation and suggestion made was supported by the information gathered from the study's informants.

**Confirmability**. This emphasized conformability as a way to guarantee objectivity. The study was designed to reduce the influence of interviewer biases because an in-depth interview (IDI) was conducted in person. The researcher sought to provide the experiences, difficulties, coping mechanisms, and insights of a senior in high school enrolled in an alternative course by altering the learning modalities. Instead of coming from the researcher's imagination, the data and the interpretations of the findings were taken straight from the data.

## Ethical Considerations

According to Silverman (2007), examining one's professional association's ethical principles, ethical considerations can be clarified. In this regard, I will provide letter of permission to the participants to allow me to conduct interviews with them. Creswell (1988) emphasized that informants should be given anonymity to protect them and that they should decide whether to divulge their personal experiences. This is the reason why I will respect and observe the anonymity of the participants to hide their identities. The findings of the study will be presented to the participants to demonstrate ethical consideration, providing them the chance to understand how crucial they are to the success of my study. The participants, therefore, will be asked to sign a verification letter that connotes permission for their involvement in the research. The verification letter as well as the remarks they made during the interview are identical to the ones that are transcribed.

Accepting the assertion indicates that I will recognize independent people who are willingly share knowledge. A healthy research partnership promotes openness, trust, and sensitivity to potential ethical dilemmas. Further, to ensure the observance of ethical standards, the researcher will secure a letter containing the permission of the dean of the graduate school in conducting research and a letter containing the permission of the head of an institution where the research participants are selected.


## FINDINGS

This chapter presents the rich, nuanced findings drawn from the lived experiences of eight mathematically inclined alumni of New Kapatagan National High School who, despite their aptitude in mathematics, found themselves enrolled in a strand that does not align with their strengths or preferred academic path.

To fully understand these experiences, the study employed in-depth interviews that allowed for a deeper, more personal exploration of each participant's story. The interviews captured surface-level responses and the students' internal struggles, coping mechanisms, and reflections on identity, purpose, and academic belonging. Each narrative was carefully analyzed through content analysis, allowing for the emergence of themes that spoke to commonalities and unique aspects of their experiences.

In adherence to ethical standards in qualitative research, pseudonyms and participant codes were used to preserve confidentiality and protect the students' identities. The presentation of the findings follows the structure of the specific research questions posed in the study, ensuring that each theme is anchored in the original objectives while honoring the voices and emotions of the participants.

**What are the experiences of the mathematically inclined senior high school students who took an alternative strand in senior high school?**

This section presents the results to the 1st major research question; 'What are the experiences of the

mathematically inclined senior high school students who took an alternative strand in senior high school?' Three specific research questions were used to gather data and information for this major research question. The questions were intended to gather information on the research participants' understanding regarding the pedagogical functions or responsibilities of the school principal and their expectations in view of the functions and responsibilities. The questions aimed to explore how the participants, students with a natural affinity for mathematics, understood the role of the school principal in shaping their educational journey, particularly in terms of guidance, support, and decision-making. It also sought to uncover these students' expectations toward school leadership, especially in the context of being placed in a strand that didn't align with their academic strengths or aspirations.

**Reasons in Taking Alternative Strand in Senior High School.**
The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 1.1 What are the reasons why you take an alternative strand in senior high school? The responses generated two themes: The Only Strand Offered by the School, Influenced by Group of Friends.

**The Only Strand Offered by the School.** This theme reflects a reality that deeply shaped the participants' academic journeys. For these mathematically inclined students, their enrollment in an alternative strand was not born of preference but of necessity because it was the only option available at their school. This theme highlights a critical dimension of the principal's pedagogical responsibility: the decisions surrounding curriculum offerings and their direct impact on students' academic pathways.

This was supported by Informant 1, who stated that:

> *Sa during sakong SH, Wala koy mabuhat maam kay mao man ang offer sa school. Kay aron maka undergo ko ani nga strand.*
>
> (During my Senior High School, I did not have a choice, ma'am, because that was the only strand offered by the school. I just had to take it so I could continue studying.)

Informant 2 emphasized the role of accessibility and financial limitations, stating that:

> *Based sa amuang community sa new kapatagan ako nag kuha ug lahi nga strand kay sa accebility rapud ng ge offer rasab sa school kay if mag kug lahi nga starnd mo adto gyud ko sa sentro didtua ssa poblacion tapus need man gud didtua ug dako nga expencess kay mag rent pa baya kug room didtua, mas convenient man gud sa akoa if diri rako na school kay dili nako madak-an ug gasto akoang family ba. So kung unsay gina offer diri sa amaoang school is mao nalang sab amoang kuhaon.*
>
> (In our community in New Kapatagan, I took a different strand only because that is what the school offered. If I wanted another strand, I would have to go to the town center, which meant paying rent and other expenses. It was too costly for my family, so we just settled for what was available.)

Informant 3 shared the student's tone reflects quiet resignation, accepting a path that did not match their goals, because they had no other alternative, stating that:

> *So lahi sa lahi na kuan kanang akong gusto jud na strand so mao to ako nalang I take kay sa moang school wala nay lain nga strand mao to ako nang I take.*
>
> (The strand I took was different from what I really wanted, but since our school did not offer any other option, I just went with it.)

Informant 5 added that this underscores the dual burden of financial difficulty and limited school offerings that many students face, stating that:

> *Kuan kay wala, mao Ramay available sa amoang school niya walapoy kuan pod kwarta kay lisod pud ang kinabuhi mao to kuan nalang strand available sa school.*
>
> (There was no other strand available in our school, and we did not have money either. Life is hard, so I just took what was there.)

In addition, Informant 6 points out how family circumstances heavily influenced their decision, even when it meant giving up on their preferred academic path, stating that:

> *Wala nako ni adto sa laing school sa ubang lungsod kay lisud man kaayo sa part sa akoang parent kay madak-an man sila sa akoang expenses, maong kung unsay available sa bukid nga strand mao nalang pud akoang ge kuha po.*
>
> (I did not go to other schools in nearby towns because it would've been too hard on my parents financially. So, I just enrolled in the only strand available in our school in the mountains.)

Informant 7 explained that this reflects a different kind of limitation, not just about what is available, but what is left, emphasizing how students sometimes end up in strands by default, stating that:

> *Maayong gabie maam nag take ko ani nga strand maam kay wala naman lain sudlan maam puno puno naman jud ang lain strand nya mao raman pud ang bakanti maam maong didto rako nisulod*
>
> (Good evening, ma'am. I took this strand because the other ones were already full. This was the only one with an open slot, so I enrolled here.)

Finally, Informant 8 gave a detailed account, stating that:

> *The only reason bisan dili sya align sa akoang pag collage kay ang availability ragyud maam kay isa raman gud ang available nga strand sa New Kapatagan maam tapus duol ra pagyud sa amoa and then ang uban school man gud kay mag take pag pila ka kilometers ang kalayo. For me I have no choice to the available strand nga offer sa maong school. Tapus mao rasa ang naa maong wala me mabuhat kundi e pursue nalang kay mao raman ang available that time maong kato nalang akoang ge take. Kay kung naa ray laing choices nga laing strand nga align sa akoang gusto nga kuhaon nga courses akoa gyud e take, siguro dili capable ang school mo gunit ug laing strand kay tungod sab siguro sa facility. Maong kung unsa nalang ang available akoa nalang e padayun ug e take.*
>
> (The only reason I took this strand even though it does not match what I want for college is because it was the only one available in New Kapatagan, and the school is close to home. Other schools are far, and you would have to travel many kilometers. I had no choice. If there had been other strands that aligned with my goals, I would have taken them. Maybe our school just does not have the facilities to offer more.)

**Influenced by Group of Friends.** Another significant theme that emerged from the participants' narratives is the influence of peer groups on their decision to enroll in a strand that did not align with their

mathematical strengths. For many, the absence of true academic choice was compounded by the desire for belonging, familiarity, and emotional support especially in a time of transition. When there were few or no strand options available, the presence of friends often became the deciding factor.

Informant 4 shared a more personal struggle influenced by both family and peer dynamics, stating that:

> *Sa kuan kanang walay kauban akong mama tapos nakuan nalang pud sa barkada didtoa raman pud sila nang eskwela pero gusto jud ko dre sa monkayo para connect sa math ba dili man wala may kaubna si mama ato maong didto raman.*

> (At that time, my mother could not go with me to another place, and I ended up just enrolling in the same school where my friends went. Honestly, I really wanted to study in Monkayo because they had a strand that is more connected to math. But since my mom could not accompany me and I had no one there, I just stayed here.)

**Factors Influenced in Taking an Alternative Strand in Senior High School**

The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 1.2 What influenced you to take an alternative strand in senior high school? The responses generated six themes: To Enhance Skills, My Sibling Funded My Schooling, Financial Problem, Influenced by Group of Friends, To Help Parents in Farming, Influenced by Family

**To Enhance Skills.** This theme reflects how some mathematically inclined students tried to find meaning in their situation, even when placed in a strand that did not match their strengths. Despite the mismatch, they chose to focus on developing new skills offered by the strand, hoping these would still be useful in the future. For them, it was a way of making the best out of a limited situation. This mindset shows resilience, the willingness to grow even when the path is not ideal. Their stories remind us that students often adapt not because they have many choices, but because they want to keep moving forward.

> Informant 1 shared a more hopeful perspective, stating that:

> *Sa pag take nako aning akoang strand nga animation is gusto lang gyud nako ma inhance akoang skill, if gusto nako e pursue akoang kurso, kintahay dili sya inline sa akoang gusto nga akoang e kurso is pina-agi ani nga skills maam mangita gyud pud ko nga mas mapadali ug kanang naa pud koy background sa animation aron naa sab koy goal sa akoang pag skwela*

> (I chose this animation strand because I really wanted to enhance my skills. Even if it is not aligned with the course I want to take in college, I thought that gaining skills in animation could still help me in the future. At least I would have a background in something useful, and it gives me a goal to work toward while I'm in school.)

**My Sibling Funded My Schooling.** This theme highlights the strong family support some students relied on to continue their education. In the absence of financial stability, siblings stepped in to help, often sacrificing their own needs so the student could stay in school. This kind of support deeply shaped the student's motivation and sense of responsibility. It also added emotional weight to their academic journey, knowing someone believed in them enough to invest in their future. Their stories are a quiet reminder of how family sacrifices often carry students through tough decisions.

Informant 2 shared how their older sister played a big role in shaping their educational path, stating that:

*Sa akoa nga case kay akoa man gud sister ang nag gastos since high school so kung unsa iyahang gusto ipakuha na course like same man gyud pud mig gusto nako kuhaon na course kay teacher man sab iyahang ge kuha. Ako man gud personally kung unsa iyahang gina ingon akoa man gud ginatuman kay siya man gud una nag school sa akoa. Kani man gud nga strand kay mas compatible man gud sya sa teaching gud. So maminaw gyud ko sa iyahang gina ingon kay I know man gud nga nindot man pud sya althougt dili man gyud sya mao akauang kuhaon pero nindot man gud sya*

(In my case, it was my sister who paid for my schooling since high school. That is why I usually follow what she suggests, especially when it comes to what course or strand to take. We actually have the same dream—she also took up teaching—so I followed in her footsteps. This strand is more compatible with becoming a teacher, so I listened to her advice, even if it was not exactly what I originally wanted. I trust her guidance because she has been through it before me, and I know she wants the best for me.)

**Financial Problem.** This theme captures the difficult reality many students face when their educational choices are limited not by interest or ability, but by money. For mathematically inclined students, this meant setting aside their true passions simply because they could not afford to study elsewhere or take a more aligned strand. Instead of choosing freely, they were forced to settle for what was available and affordable. These financial challenges did not just affect their schooling, they shaped their dreams, their options, and their sense of control over their future. It is a quiet but powerful reminder that talent often needs opportunity, not just ability.

Informant 3 spoke honestly about their situation, stating that:

*Isa pud sa reason wala pud mi financian ay kanang dili mi financial stable kana mangita nalang pud mi ay isa pud doul sya sa amoang lugar kana nalang pud akong I take na strand, money jud.*

(One of the reasons I took this strand is because we are not financially stable. We really could not afford much, so I just chose the one that was offered near our place. It all came down to money, really.)

**Influenced by Group of Friends.** This theme shows how peer relationships played a big role in the decisions students made about their strand. For some mathematically inclined students, the comfort of being with friends sometimes outweighed their academic goals. They chose to stay where their friends were, even if the strand was not aligned with their strengths, because it gave them a sense of belonging and support. This influence speaks to the importance of emotional security, especially for young people facing big life choices. While their decisions may not have matched their potential, they found strength in staying connected with people they trusted.

Informant 4 admitted that their decision was influenced by both financial struggles and the presence of friends, stating that:

*Didtoa nalang pud maam kay maka less man pud ko didtoa kay tungod pud sa kalisod kaun nalang pud sa eskwela, yes maam barkada pud maam, yes maam*

(I chose to enroll there because it helped me save money, and honestly, my friends were also going there. So, I just went with them.)

Informant 5 also shared a similar experience, stating that:

*Kuan kauban mga classmate nga dati sa grade 10 nya wala nay lain na strand kana ra na strand mi nisulod gusto pud namo na strand naa man sa layo dili naman jud ma pursue kay mao lagi pait*

(I went with my former classmates from Grade 10. Since there was only one strand available, we all entered that one. We wanted a different strand, but it was offered far away, and we knew we could not afford it.)

Informant 8 revealed mixed feelings, torn between personal goals and peer influence, stating that:

*I think it takes of generality gani maam kay mao raman sab ang offer sa school, although pipila ra subject ang naay related sa math so naay capability nga maka gain kog knowledge. bisag dili sya mag go deeper gani sa math atleast naa namiy basic nga kaalam po. Maong akoa nalang sab ge pursue kay some of my friends nga diri nalang ta skwela kay wala naman lain choice bahalag kani nalang atuang strand. I planned nga mag transfer gyud maam kay gusto gyud nako mamahimong mathematical teacher mao lage to tungod sa friends padayun nalang gyud kay 2yrs raman bitaw ni*

(The school only offered one strand, and while it barely touched on math, I thought at least I could gain some basic knowledge. My friends said, 'Let us just study here,' since we did not really have other choices. I actually planned to transfer because I really want to become a math teacher, but I ended up staying because of them. I thought, 'It was just two years anyway.)

**To Help Parents in Farming.** This theme reflects the deep sense of responsibility some students feel toward their families. For mathematically inclined students living in rural areas, choosing a nearby strand, even if it did not align with their strengths, meant they could stay close to home and help their parents on the farm. Their decisions were not just about academics but also about easing the burden on their families. Balancing school with farm work became a reality they accepted out of love and necessity. It is a quiet sacrifice, showing how family needs often shape educational choices more than personal interests.

Informant 6 shared how staying close to home was not just a choice, but a necessity, stating that:

*Like sa amoang pag-uma sa bukid kanang dili sya mabiyaan ug walay mag atiman kay if naa rako sa amoang duol na school maka tabang pako sap ag atiman sa amoang mga kahayupan ug amoang mga tanom po ug dili sab ko gusto malayo sa pamilya pud.*

(In our farm, there is always work that needs to be done, someone has to look after the crops and animals. That is why I chose the nearby school. At least there, I can still help my family with farming and livestock. I also did not want to be far from them.)

**Influenced by Family.** This theme reflects how the choices of mathematically inclined students were often shaped by the guidance, or expectations, of their family members. Instead of pursuing a strand that aligned with their strengths or passions, some followed what their parents or siblings' thought was best.

For these students, the desire to respect and trust their family's advice sometimes outweighed their own interests. It was not just about obedience, but also about gratitude, love, and a hope that their family knew what was best for their future. Their academic journey, then, became a shared decision rooted in family values and support.

Informant 7 shared that their decision was mainly shaped by their family, stating that:

> *Ang kuan rapud maam pamliya og igsoon rapud nako mau rapud naka influence sa akoa kana na strand diha man pud sila gikan makatabang pud na sa akoa*
>
> (It was really my family and my sibling who influenced me to take this strand. They also came from the same strand, so they thought it would help me too.)

**Ways Oneself Treat One's Study Amid Taking Alternative Strand**

The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 1.3 How do you treat your study knowing that you only took an alternative strand? The responses generated four themes: Use it as a Preparation, Embrace the Journey, Took Studies Seriously, Uphold My Strand.

**Use it as a Preparation.** This theme shows how some mathematically inclined students viewed their current strand not as a perfect fit, but as a stepping stone. Even if the strand did not align with their true interests in mathematics, they still found value in the skills and knowledge they could gain from it. For these students, the decision was practical, they used what was available to them as a way to prepare for their future courses or careers. It was about making the most of what they had while keeping their long-term goals in sight. This mindset reflects their resilience and ability to adapt despite limitations.

Informant 1 explained that taking the available strand was more of a practical decision than a dream pursued, stating that:

> *Pina-agi sa kani nga kurso maam is dili man gyud ma provide ang akoang gusto sa akoang ginikanan pina-agi ani nga kurso maam is ma encourage napud ko na if puhon-puhon if naa koy e take inig collage kay mao man gud ning preparation sa akoang pag collage maam is wala gyud koy laing option is mo undergo gyud ko ani nga strand kay mao raman ang offer sa school nga duol-duol sa amoa maam. Sa akoang pag skwela maam is wala gyud koy laing option nga mo go lang gyud ko ani nga courses*
>
> (Since my parents could not give me the course I really wanted, I just treated this strand as a preparation for college. I did not have any other option anyway; it was the only one offered near our place. Even though it is not exactly what I wanted, I thought it could still help me once I get to college.)

**Embrace the Journey.** This theme captures how some mathematically inclined students learned to accept and find meaning in a path they did not originally choose. Even though the strand was not aligned with their passion for math, they chose to stay, adapt, and make the best out of it. Over time, they found purpose in learning new skills, meeting new people, and growing through the unexpected. Instead of focusing on what they lacked, they focused on what they could gain. It is a story of resilience, turning an unplanned route into a valuable experience.

Informant 2 shared how they learned to accept the situation, even if it was not their first choice, stating that:

> *Siguro sa akoa maam syempre dili man gyud mao akoang choices tapus wala sab koy choice akoa nalang ge embrace tapus maningkamot nalang gyud ka kay if dili ka maningkamot ikaw raman sab ang ma-apiktuhan ug imuha nalang ihatag imuhang best bisag kabalo ka nga dili kato ang best para sa imuhang teacher tapus naa naman ka dira maong go nalang pud.*
>
> (For me, ma'am, I knew this was not really what I wanted, but since I had no other choice, I just embraced it. I told myself to work hard because if I do not, I will be the one to suffer. Even if this strand was not the best fit for me or what my teachers expected, I still gave it my best. I was already there, so I just decided to keep going.)

**Took Studies Seriously.** This theme highlights how some students, despite being in a strand that was not their first choice, decided to focus and put their full effort into their studies. They recognized that education was important for their future, so they chose to take their learning seriously, even if the subject matter did not align with their passions. This commitment to their studies, regardless of external factors, reflects their determination to succeed and make the most of the opportunities they had. It is a story of resilience, showing that, sometimes, the best way forward is through hard work and dedication, no matter the circumstances.

Informant 3 shared how they took their studies seriously despite the strand not being their first choice, stating that:

> *So isa na influence pud ko sa akong friends end kanang pud ay ma kuan pud nako kay mao to akong strand mao nalang ni akong gikuha so akong gibuhat nag research end then naga basa basa ko mga books about sa ing ana end then mao siguro nan aka influence sa akoa para magustohan pud akong gibuhat na strand, seryoso tarong eskwela akong pamilya kay financial stable kailangan tarong eskwela para padayun, para maka graduate*
>
> (I was influenced by my friends, but I also did my research and read books about it to understand the strand better. My family is financially stable, so I know I need to take my education seriously to continue and graduate.)

Informant 4 described how their financial situation initially made them see their studies as just a means to graduate, but the involvement of their classmates helped them take their education more seriously, stating that:

> *Katong una maam katong pag ingon na diha diha didtoa ra kay no choice tungod atong financial sa mama ah basta maka gruadte lang og grade 12 ok na pero pag kuan tungod sa invarolment sa classmate murag na sesryoso pud,oo*
>
> (At first, it was all about getting through and graduating, especially because of the financial situation at home. But once I got into the class and saw how seriously my classmates were taking it, I started to take it more seriously too.)

Informant 6 explained that their motivation to study seriously came from wanting to help their family, stating that:

*Akoa maam seryuso gyud ko sa akoang pag skwela kay aron if mahuman ko makatabang pud ko sa akoang pamilya. Kanang naming kamot rasab ko bisag kato ra nga strand akoang gipili.*

(I am really serious about my studies because once I finish, I want to help my family. Even though I chose this strand, I am still doing my best.)

Informant 7 emphasized the importance of studying seriously to repay their parents' sacrifices, stating that:

*Tarong gihapun eskwela maam kay kuan sympre ning kamot ang ginikanan wala tay mahimo kundi eskwela jud tag tarong maynalang maka sukli ta sa ginikanan ,tarong tarong kaau uy*

(I am focused on my studies because my parents have worked hard for me. We do not have many options, so I have to study well to make them proud and give back to them.)

Informant 8 shared how they took their studies seriously, despite the strand not aligning with their goals, stating that:

*As a student bisan pag dili sya align maam akoa man sya ge tarung ug nag tarong gyud pud ko ato ug skwela kay aron naay achievements gani maam. Kay taas bayag expectation akoang parents ug friends kay sukad juniorhigh kanang murag achiever naman gud ko kay naa koy gina sustain na grade although dili sya align sa akoang gusto na course na kuhaon akoa gihapun to ge tarung ug ge paningkamutan nga mahuman. Ug ge take gyud pud to nako seriously kay naa man sab siyay mga interesting na mga subject bisan dili sya kaayo into math*

(Even though the strand was not what I wanted, I still took it seriously because I wanted to achieve something. My parents and friends have high expectations for me, and I have always been an achiever, so I made sure to work hard to finish it, even if the subjects were not entirely math-related.)

**Uphold My Strand.** This theme reflects how students, despite facing challenges or doubts about their chosen strand, still decide to fully commit to it and uphold its value. For these students, their strand might not align with their original interests or academic strengths, but they have chosen to stand by it. They take pride in the skills they are gaining and see it as an opportunity for growth, even if it is not their ideal path. It is about finding value in what they have, making the most of the experience, and embracing the journey with determination. They choose to stay strong and committed, believing that every learning opportunity is important for their future.

Informant 5 shared how they made the best of their situation, despite not being fully happy with their strand, stating that:

*Gi paningkamotan paramahuman kani na KT12 para sa collage na kwaon na course, dili kaau ganahan sa strand na gikuha, bahalg dili gusto, kuan kanang ,gipaningdigan nalang nako ang kaun na gikuha nako na strand masayang man ang ang gasto sa akong mama og papa kong dili pud nako tarungon pud gusto man pud sila na maka graduate maong gitarong nalang pud, oo*

(I am doing my best to finish this KT12 strand because it is part of my path to college. I do not really like the strand I chose, but I am sticking with it

because I do not want to waste my parents' money. They want me to graduate, so I decided to take it seriously and finish it, even though it is not what I originally wanted.)

**What are the challenges of the mathematically inclined senior high school students who took an alternative strand in senior high school?**

This section presents the results to the 2nd major research question; 'What are the challenges of the mathematically inclined senior high school students who took an alternative strand in senior high school?' Three specific research questions were used to gather data and information for this major research question. The questions were designed to uncover the challenges faced by mathematically inclined students who found themselves in strands that did not match their strengths. They explored how students understood the role of the school principal in providing guidance and support during this misalignment. Many participants struggled with the lack of direction and felt their potential was overlooked due to limited options. The questions also revealed that students expected more proactive leadership in helping them access strands that suited their abilities. Ultimately, their experiences highlighted a gap between what they needed and what the system, and its leaders, were able to offer.

**Struggles of Mathematically-Inclined Student Who Took an Alternative Strand in One's Study.**

The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 2.1 What are your struggles as a mathematically inclined students who took an alternative strand in your study? The responses generated four themes: Hard Time Understanding Lessons, There is Pressure, Did Not Experience Struggles, Different Learning Environment.

**Hard Time Understanding Lessons.** This theme highlights the struggles students face when they encounter difficulties grasping the lessons in their chosen strand. Despite their efforts, some students find it challenging to connect with the material or concepts being taught. This can be especially frustrating when the subject matter does not align with their natural strengths or interests. These students often feel overwhelmed but continue to push through, seeking help when needed, because they are determined to succeed. Their persistence shows that, even in the face of struggles, they are committed to overcoming obstacles and achieving their educational goals.

Informant 3 mentioned the difficulty of adjusting to a new strand, stating that:

> *lahi jud sa akong gikuha na strand so dili jud sya lalim daghan kaau kog struggles then kanang uban na mga lessons kay dili kaau nako maka sabot lahi man jud daghan man jud like drew lahi pud sa math more on solving sila so lisod jud sa akoa mas dira man ko hawod sa kuan sa akong gi eskwelahan then karon lahi pud akong gikuha maong daghan jud kog struggle sa mga lesson mga diskasyon dili kaau nako ma cope up*
>
> (It is really different from what I took before, and I struggle a lot. Some of the lessons are hard to understand because they are not like math, which I am good at. There is a lot more solving, and it is hard for me to keep up with the discussions.)

Informant 1 also pointed out the challenge of having a gap between their previous strand and the current one, stating that:

> *Based sakung experience sa BSED layo gyud syag gap kay during sakong Senior High kay lahi ang strand ana tapus ang mag solving man gud maam*

*is lisud e justify. Mas nindot gyud siguro kung unsa akoang strand sauna diko mag lisud sakong course karung sama sa pag answer kanang pag naa man gud gap imuhang course mag lisud man gud kag answer kug as aka mag start kung swak ba sya sa pangutana.*

(Based on my experience, the gap was huge between my old strand and the one I have now. The subjects here are difficult to justify, especially solving problems. It would have been easier if I had stuck with the strand I was comfortable with.)

Informant 4 expressed frustration with the difficulty of certain subjects:

*Lliosd kaau maam uy pati kuan pati miners na subject mag liosd jud kag kuan sa ilaha, kanang mmw kanang aljebra mga basic lang mag liosd gihapun ko*

(It is really hard, even in subjects like algebra. I struggle even with the basics.)

Informant 5 shared how the shift to a different strand made it harder to keep up, stating that:

*So lisod jud kaau sya kay kuan sa akong strand sa senior high kay arts man arts karon nga nag mathematic solve solve liosd jud I apas sa mga classmate nako nga naka nay silay background na subject nga nay kaalaman ako nga wala kay ako kay lahi ra na strand akong gikuha, oo, lisod kaau iapas sa mga classmate kay mao to lahi*

(It is so difficult because my strand in senior high was arts, but now I am doing a lot of math, which I am not familiar with. I am trying to catch up with my classmates who already have a background in this subject.)

Informant 7 also mentioned struggling to keep up with lessons, stating that:

*Kanang kuan maam igo rakag apas sa imohang classmate kanang pagsabot maam,pagsabot sa lesson maam mag lisod kog top ups ,yes maam*

(It is hard to understand the lessons, and I am always trying to catch up with my classmates. It is difficult to grasp some of the topics.)

**There is Pressure.** This theme reflects the weight that students feel when faced with the expectations of excelling in a strand that does not align with their strengths or aspirations. This pressure comes from various sources, including the fear of disappointing their families, the desire to succeed in an unfamiliar subject, and the pressure to meet academic standards. Students often feel like they must push themselves beyond their limits to keep up, even when the material is challenging. Despite the difficulty, they remain committed to working hard because they feel responsible for their future and the sacrifices made by their families.

Informant 2 discussed the pressure of not understanding the lessons and the struggle to keep up with classmates, stating that:

*Ang pinaka struggle gyud nako ana maam no is wala gyud ko kasabot sa gi-tudlo gud tapus pressure kaayo sya kay ang ubang classmates nimo kay wala pud goy knowledge ana tapus ang uban nako classmate naay knowledge sa math kay kanang na exposed na gani sila ana samantalang ako unsay connect anang mag layout-layout anang animation, struggle gyud sya maam kay lisud mag-apas sa mga knowledge sa akoang mga*

*classmates, kay naa naman gud silay experience samantalang ako nga start gyud from the start maong lisud gyud.*

(My biggest struggle is not understanding what is being taught. It is really stressful because some of my classmates are already familiar with the subject, while I have no background in it. They have been exposed to math before, but I am starting from scratch, and it is tough trying to catch up.)

**Did Not Experience Struggles.** This theme refers to students who, despite facing challenges in their studies, felt they were able to adapt well to their courses or strands. These students did not find the transition as difficult or overwhelming as others. They might have had prior knowledge or skills that helped them manage the lessons with ease. Whether it was due to their natural aptitude, previous exposure to similar subjects, or strong support from teachers or peers, they felt confident and capable in navigating their academic journey without significant struggles. This theme highlights resilience, adaptability, or preparedness that made their learning experience smoother compared to their peers.

Informant 6 shared that they did not face significant struggles with their chosen strand in senior high, stating that:

*Dili raman gud lisud sa akoang gikuha na degree ang strand nga akoang ge kuha sa senior high kay dili paman gud kaayo lisud ang math karun kay nag sugod paman gud sa mga basic math ang amoang klase.*

(It is not that hard for me because the math we are learning now is still at the basic level, and we are just starting with it in class.)

**Different Learning Environment.** This theme reflects how students experience a shift in their academic setting compared to traditional classrooms. For some, this change can be refreshing, offering a more flexible, personalized, or less stressful atmosphere to learn in. It could involve smaller class sizes, more hands-on learning, or a focus on subjects that feel more relevant to their interests. In this environment, students might feel more comfortable and motivated, allowing them to engage better with the material. The theme highlights the impact of a learning space that caters to individual needs, making education feel more accessible and empowering for students.

Informant 8 shared that they noticed a significant difference in the learning environment between their current school and their previous one, stating that:

*Lahi ragyud ang environment sa new kapatagan compare diri sa poblacion kay ang level of understanding sa akoa mga classmates about sa mathematics kay behind ragyud sa akoa maam, so mao to na culture shock ko sa ilahang understanding gud sa concept maam kay during sa discussion lahi ragyud kay e compare maam sa mga previous nga prof nga mo ana nga kabalo naman mo ani no kay during SH ge tudluan naman mo ani tapus ako nga lahi ang strand nakuratan ko kay lahi man amoa tapus ang uban nakong mga classmates kay okay lang sa ilaha. Maong naka realized ko na lahi ragyud akoang na learn during HS compared sa collage.*

(The learning environment in New Kapatagan is really different compared to here in Poblacion, especially when it comes to the level of understanding among my classmates. Their grasp of mathematics is far behind mine, so I experienced a bit of a culture shock. During discussions, it felt very different compared to previous professors who assumed we already knew certain

concepts because we were taught these in high school. But for me, since I am in a different strand now, I was surprised because it felt like everything was new, and some of my classmates seemed okay with it. That made me realize that what I learned in high school is really different from what I am learning in college.)

**Difficulties in Learning Lessons in Chosen Track**

The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 2.2 What are your difficulties in learning your lessons in your chosen track? The responses generated four themes: Course not Aligned, Teacher's Expectation, No Difficulties, Hard Time Understanding Mathematics Lessons.

**Course not Aligned.** The theme refers to the experience of students whose chosen academic path or course does not match their strengths, interests, or previous knowledge. This misalignment can lead to frustration or difficulty in keeping up with lessons, as students might struggle with subjects or concepts that feel out of place for them. They might find themselves in a course that does not fully connect with their abilities, leading to a disconnect between what they enjoy or excel at and what they are required to learn. The theme highlights the challenges of being in an academic environment that does not fit well with a student's skills or passions, which can impact their motivation and overall learning experience.

Informant 1 shared their thoughts on the disconnect between their chosen strand and their future academic plans, stating that:

> *Sa akoang gi choose kay mao man ang offer sa school nag padayun lang gihapun ko maam kay bahalag dili sya inline sa akaong courses nga math kanang sa lisud man gud na pamaagi ba diraa man gud ka maka learn ba, kung unsaon nimo pag develop kung usaon nimo pag fined sa sulotion nga kana man imuhang strand sa senior high nga wala manko mag too nga mamahimo kung BSED-Math student nga dili man inline sa imuhang courses ang imuhang gi sudlan karun.*
>
> (I continued with this strand because it was the only option offered by the school, even though it is not aligned with my passion for math. It is hard because the approach is different, and I never thought I would be a BSED Math student, especially with a strand that does not match my intended course.)

Informant 4 expressed that they did not experience struggles in the traditional sense but felt that the transition was a challenge, stating that:

> *Kuang dili kanang wala ko ka try kanang sa senior high  layo ra kaau sa senior high sa kanang kuan wala jud nako na experience bhalag kato lang na number ba ,nga oo,lahi rajud kaau*
>
> (I did not have much experience in senior high with this kind of learning, and it felt really different from what I expected, especially when dealing with numbers. It was just a completely different experience.)

Informant 5 shared the difficulty of understanding basic math concepts in their new strand, stating that:

> *Sa mga kaun sa mga  say tawag ani mga basic sa math  nga dili na I explaine I discuss sa akong instructor ksay mao lagi naagian namo sa senior highkay wala man ko kaagi ana kay lahi man na strand akong gisudlan  liosd jud kog apas sa akong mga classmate ,oo mga ing ana*

(Some of the basic math concepts were never really explained or discussed well by the instructor. Since I did not experience this in senior high, it has been hard to catch up with my classmates. It is tough when your strand is so different.)

**Teacher's Expectation.** The theme refers to the expectations that teachers have for their students in terms of performance, behavior, and engagement. These expectations can shape the learning experience, as students may feel pressure to meet these standards. For some, it can be motivating, pushing them to do their best, while for others, it might create stress or feelings of inadequacy if they feel they cannot live up to the teacher's expectations. This theme emphasizes the influence teachers have on students' academic journeys, showing how their attitudes and standards can either inspire confidence or add pressure, depending on how well the student feels they can meet those expectations.

Informant 2 shared their frustration with the teaching style, stating that:

> *Ang diffilculty gyud nako ato kay kanang the way mag tudlo ang teacher sa imuha kanang nag expect nga you knowledge nagyud ana unya wala paman koy foundation ato. Maong expected nga nag BSEDMATH ko hawud nagyud ko ana smart nako sa ilahang panglantaw.*
>
> (The difficulty for me was how the teacher expected us to already know certain things. They assumed that, because I am in BSED Math, I should be proficient at math already, but I did not have a solid foundation in it. It made me feel like they thought I was already smart, but I was not.)

Informant 3 explained the challenges of their lessons, especially in math, stating that:

> *Sa amoa ron naa mi lesson about sa isa pud sa among instructor is naga ano nada hawd pud sya sa math kanag tungod lahi man akong strand na gikuha lisod jud sa akoa nag struggle dili man jud moinngon man instructor kong kabalo namo ani sa basic dili nanato usabon so nya ako na wala pa kaau kabalo mag usab nalang pud ko mag search nalang pud kog usab dili man ko parihas sa uban kabalo na sa basic then dali napud sa ilaha*
>
> (In one of our lessons, our instructor assumed we knew the basics of math because of the strand we chose. Since I'm not familiar with these basics, it is hard for me. The instructor did not go back to the basics, so I had to search for information on my own. It is tough because my classmates already had a strong foundation, and it is easier for them.)

**No Difficulties.** The theme refers to the experience of students who find their academic journey relatively smooth and free from major challenges. These students may feel confident and at ease with the material, not facing the struggles or frustrations that others might encounter. Whether due to prior knowledge, strong personal skills, or a supportive learning environment, they can navigate their studies with little to no trouble. This theme highlights a sense of comfort and assurance in learning, where students feel that their path is clear, and they can move forward without significant obstacles in their way. It reflects a positive, stress-free experience in their education.

Informant 6 shared their approach to dealing with the lessons, stating that:

> *Dili man kaayo sya lisud sabton kay maminaw raman pud ta sa lesson ng age hatag sa atuang maistra unya maminaw lang gyud ta aron dali rata kasabot sa lesson. Maminaw lang sa discussion.*

> (It is not that hard to understand because we just listen to the lessons that our teacher gives us. As long as we pay attention to the discussion, it is easier for us to grasp the concepts.)

**Hard Time Understanding Mathematics Lessons.** The theme reflects the experience of students who struggle to grasp the concepts and ideas presented in their math classes. For these students, the lessons can feel overwhelming, and the material may seem complicated or difficult to relate to. This struggle often leads to feelings of frustration and confusion, as they try to keep up with the pace of the class or understand the steps involved in solving problems. It highlights the emotional and cognitive challenges that come with learning subjects like math, where students may feel disconnected from the content or unsure of how to apply what they have learned. Despite these difficulties, this theme also reflects the resilience some students show as they continue to push through and seek help in overcoming their challenges.

Informant 7 expressed that understanding the lessons is possible, but still challenging, stating that:

> *Kanang wala kay ,maka sabot man jud ko maam pero dili nako mag lisod jud kog kanang hunahuna unsaon pag sabot og tarong jud ,yes maam*
>
> (I can understand the lessons, ma'am, but I struggle to fully comprehend them and figure out how to grasp them properly.)

Informant 8 shared the difficulties they faced transitioning from senior high to college:

> *Dako gyud syag difficulties sa akoa nga experience during sa akaong first year ug second year kay daghan ug kanang mga concepts nga wala gani nako natun-an sa akoang seniorhigh daghan kaayog mga mathematics nga wala pa nako natun-an ug kato pa nako nahibaluan ug nasugakod during sakong pag sugod pagyud ug collage maam. Pero kailangan nako e sustain nga dapat ma pasar gyud nako ni nga course ug ma survive ug magpadayun gyud dapat.*
>
> (I had a lot of difficulties during my first and second years because there were many concepts in math that I did not learn in senior high. I struggled a lot with the topics, and it made me doubt if I was in the right course. But I know I need to push through and pass this course no matter what.)

**Hindrance in Engaging in School Activities**

The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 2.3 What hinders you to engage in school activities? The responses generated three themes: Not Knowledgeable Enough, Too Shy to Participate, Lack of Understanding.

**Not Knowledgeable Enough.** The theme reflects the feeling some students have when they do not feel adequately prepared or informed about the subject they are studying. This sense of being underprepared can create feelings of insecurity or self-doubt, as they may struggle to keep up with the lessons or understand the concepts being taught. It can be especially challenging when students feel like others around them are more knowledgeable or confident in the subject. This theme highlights the emotional impact of feeling like you are not meeting the academic expectations, but it also points to the importance of seeking help, gaining confidence over time, and recognizing that everyone has a different learning pace. It is a reminder that it is okay to not know everything right away and that growth comes with persistence and support.

Informant 1 found enjoyment in activities like chess, which helped them achieve their goals, stating that:

*Gina lingaw-lingaw lang gyud nako maam, like mag dula-dula kog chess maam kay player man ko sa chess maam. So diraa nako gina achieve akoang goal. Pina-agi ani nga activity kung lisud gyud sya nga ma pili sa imuhang course nga mao gyud to imuhang sudlan. Study lang gyud sya maam.*

(I just enjoy it, ma'am, like playing chess. I am a chess player, so that's where I focus on achieving my goals. Even though choosing a course can be hard, I just keep studying.)

Informant 2 highlighted the challenge of engaging due to a lack of knowledge, stating that:

*Ang maka hinders sa akoa maam nga mag engaged pako kay dili kay ko knowledgeable sa maong course maong mag enhance ko sa acads kesa sa mga extracurricular activities didtua.*

(What hinders me, ma'am, is not having enough knowledge in this course. That is why I focus more on improving my academics rather than getting involved in extracurricular activities.)

Informant 3 felt hesitant to participate in math-related activities, stating that:

*Kay naa usahay kanag mga activities about sa mga math mag ing ana end then sa uban hawd sila mag solve solve dili nako dagaapil ana naa rako sa ubos diko gusto mag apil apil kay kabalo ko kay dili pa mako kaya dili paeihas sa uban ,yes po*

(Sometimes there are activities about math, but I do not join because I know I am not as good as the others at solving problems. I stay on the sidelines because I feel like I am not capable yet.)

Informant 5 mentioned feeling embarrassed about not being able to keep up, stating that:

*Kanang maulaw ko sa ilaha kay kanang dili kaau ko maki halibilof sa ilahag kong mangutana ko kay sa ilaha kana nga mga baic na subject na dali ra kaau sa akoa lisod kaau kay wala ko kaagi ana maulaw ko sa ilaha modoul na unsaon nga ing ana , sama, layo rajud kaau sila kay advance kay ako beginers pa, BSED nag math dayun, ouh wla jud*

(I feel shy with my classmates because I cannot keep up with them. For them, the basic subjects are easy, but for me, they are hard since I did not experience them before. I feel out of place and unsure of how to ask for help.)

Informant 6 acknowledged the difficulty of applied physics but found a way to manage, stating that:

*Sama sa amoang subject nga applied physics lisud gyud kaayo sya maam kay daghan kaayo syag solved-solved, pero makaya raman syag sabot basta maminaw lang gyud ka ug mag fucos lang gyud ka.*

(Applied physics is really hard, ma'am, especially with all the solving involved. But I can manage it as long as I listen and focus during class.)

**Too Shy to Participate.** The theme captures the quiet struggle of students who want to engage in class but feel held back by their own shyness or fear of judgment. These students may know the answers or have questions, but hesitate to speak up because they are worried about making mistakes or being misunderstood. Their silence is not due to lack of interest or ability, but rather a deep sense of self-

consciousness that makes participation feel intimidating. This theme highlights the emotional barrier that shyness creates in the learning process, showing how it can affect confidence, class involvement, and even performance. At its heart, it is about students who are capable but need a safe, supportive environment to feel comfortable sharing their voice.

Informant 4 shared a strong desire to learn despite difficulties, stating that:

> *Katong kuan gusto ko makabalo na unsaon bisan katong kanang nag gukod ko nag apas ko sa mga topic gusto ko makabalo maong nangutana nangutana ko sa ilaha na unsaon pag kuan ,oo , mag kuan pako sa illaha naa man pud kaun sa ilaha mura stock knowledge pero unsahay maulaw ko usahay, yes maam,yes maam, yes po maam*
>
> (I really wanted to understand the lessons, even though I was struggling to catch up with the topics. That is why I asked my classmates how to do things. They had some stock knowledge, but sometimes I felt shy to ask for help.)

Informant 7 mentioned feeling shy and reserved in class, stating that:

> *ako rapud ginikanan maam kailangan padayun nako na moa rapud makatabang sa akoa puhon kong maka human man tingali ko,kanang akong ako rapud kaulaw maam makihalubilof sa mga tao maam sa mga classmate og maistra  mao rajud akoa maam ulaw rajud kaau maam*
>
> (My parents are the reason I keep going, ma'am, because I want to help them in the future if I graduate. But honestly, ma'am, I am really shy. I find it hard to interact with classmates and teachers. That is really my main struggle, being too shy.)

**Lack of Understanding.** The theme reflects the experience of students who find it difficult to fully grasp the lessons being taught. It is not just about getting the wrong answers, it is about feeling lost, confused, or left behind during discussions or activities. These students may try to follow along, but the concepts do not quite click, leaving them frustrated or discouraged. Often, they want to learn and do well, but they need more time, clearer explanations, or a different approach to truly understand the material. This theme brings attention to the emotional weight of not understanding, feelings of embarrassment, isolation, or even self-doubt, and reminds us how important patience, support, and compassion are in any learning environment.

Informant 8 reflected on their difficulty with understanding and confidence, stating that:

> *Lack of understanding lang gyud sya maam. Like mo hatag ang teacher ug activity nga mo consume ug 7-8 hrs tapus akoang mga classmates kay gianahan mag participate kay kabalo man sila ana nga topic, tapus ako mag fucos nalang sa kung unsa akoang nasabtan tapus gusto nako naay koy e strengthen sa akoa, mao ra siguro na ang naka hinder sa akoa but thankfully naa koy mga classmate nga willing mo tabang sa akoa ug mo support sa akoa ug mo tabang sa pagpasabot sa mga topic nga wala nako nasabtan when activities man dili man gud tanan related sa math during activities maam kanang mga ipa answer sa board like kanang dili ko confident sa akoang answer kay bag-o pa lage nako nasugakod kay dili pa lage ko hasa sa maong topic, maong if wala ko kabalo sa topic dili nalang*

*gani ko mag apil-apil unya magpa kahoy-kahoy nalang gani. Maong gina motivate nalang nako akoang kaugalingon nga magpadayun nalang gyud.*
(It really comes down to a lack of understanding, ma'am. Like when the teacher gives us activities that take 7–8 hours, my classmates are excited to participate because they already understand the topic. I just focus on what I do understand and try to strengthen that. That is the challenge for me. Thankfully, I have classmates who are willing to help and explain things I do not get. During class activities, especially when we are asked to answer on the board, I do not feel confident because I have just started learning these things. Sometimes, I even pretend not to know just to avoid participating. But I just keep motivating myself to keep going.)

**What are the coping mechanisms of the mathematically inclined senior high school students who took an alternative strand in senior high school?**

This section presents the results to the 3rd major research question; 'What are the coping mechanisms of the mathematically inclined senior high school students who took an alternative strand in senior high school?' Three specific research questions were used to gather data and information for this major research question. This section explores the coping mechanisms of mathematically inclined senior high school students who were placed in strands that did not align with their strengths. The students shared that they often felt lost and unsupported, as they were placed in courses that did not cater to their talents. Many felt that their potential was overlooked, and they struggled to find guidance. The participants also expressed a desire for more proactive leadership from their school principal to help them access strands that were better suited to their skills. Their experiences highlighted a disconnect between their needs and the support the system and its leaders were able to provide. Despite these challenges, the students found their own ways to cope, relying on resourcefulness, peer support, and perseverance to navigate through the difficulties they faced.

**Ways in Coping with Struggles in School**

The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 3.1 How do you cope with your struggles in school? The responses generated five themes: Internet Connection Problem, Always Ask Questions, Do Research, Ask Help from Teachers, Lack of Knowledge.

**Internet Connection Problem.** The theme highlights the very real and often frustrating challenge faced by students who rely on unstable or limited internet access for their education. For these students, learning becomes a struggle not because of the subject itself, but because they cannot consistently connect to online classes, submit requirements on time, or access digital learning materials. It creates feelings of helplessness, stress, and even embarrassment when they miss out or fall behind, not due to lack of effort, but because of something beyond their control. This theme humanizes the digital divide, reminding us that equal access to education also means ensuring every student has the tools and connectivity they need to succeed.

Informant 1 shared how external challenges impacted their studies, stating that:

> *Ang struggle gyud nga akoang naagian maam is thru internet connection maam tapus ang pag travel padulong school. Sa akoang research maam is kuang lang gyud dapat strong gyud ang atuang foundation sap ag skwela aron maka andam ka ug suet na mga answer sa question nga gina hatag sa mga teacher.*

> (My main struggles, ma'am, were the internet connection and traveling to school. In my research, I realized that having a strong foundation in school is really important so you can be prepared to answer the questions teachers give. That is why I believe it is necessary to really build that up.)

**Always Ask Questions**. The theme reflects a coping mechanism used by students who actively seek understanding and clarity when faced with difficult lessons or unfamiliar topics. For these students, asking questions is not just about getting the right answer, it is a way to stay engaged, overcome confusion, and build confidence in their learning. It shows a willingness to take initiative, even if it means admitting they do not understand something right away. While some might feel hesitant to speak up, these students use curiosity and communication as tools to cope with challenges. This theme highlights their resilience and determination, showing how asking questions becomes a powerful strategy to take control of their learning and keep moving forward.

Informant 2 shared their approach to overcoming academic difficulties, stating that:

> *Mag study lang gyud maam. Always gyud mag study tapus try to ask question. Tapus ipakita gyud sa mga classmate nga naa sab kay weakness aron Makita gyud nila nga nag lisud sab kaba aron maka tabang gyud sila sa imuha.*
>
> (I just really study, ma'am, always. I also try to ask questions. I show my classmates that I have weaknesses too, so they can see that I am struggling and hopefully help me out.)

Informant 7 explained how they seek help when they are having trouble understanding lessons, stating that:

> *Kanang kuan maam mangutana ko sa classmate nako maam or teacher sa akong atubangan para usahay molantaw og youtube para makuha nako ang lesson maam*
>
> (I ask my classmates or even my teacher directly, ma'am. Sometimes, I also watch YouTube videos to help me understand the lessons better.)

**Do Research.** The theme reflects how students take initiative to better understand their lessons by seeking information beyond what is taught in class. When they find certain topics difficult or unclear, they do not just give up, instead, they turn to online resources, books, or videos to help fill in the gaps. This coping mechanism shows their determination to succeed and their willingness to put in extra effort. It is a quiet but powerful way of saying, "I may not get it yet, but I will find a way." This theme highlights a student's resourcefulness and self-motivation, proving that learning does not stop at the classroom door.

Informant 3 described how they approach challenges in understanding lessons, stating that:

> *Sa first jud una kay maminaw jud ko sa instructor end ten dili jud nako ma gets mag try jud kog research sa youtube unsaon jud sya pag kuan pag sabot para makabalo jud kopag solve nya kaun kanang pangutana pud ko sa akong classmate kong unsaon sya para dali rapud sa akoa*
>
> (At first, I would really listen to the instructor, but when I still did not get it, I would try researching on YouTube to understand better and learn how to solve things. I also ask my classmates how they do it, so it becomes easier for me.)

Informant 5 explained their strategy for staying caught up with their studies, stating that:

> *Kanang para dili ko nila ma byaan mag search search sa youtube na unsaon nalang nan ga subject or kanang unsaon pag solve muadto kog library mag basa basa sa lebro sa mga ing ana lantaw sa youtube try try og solve kana mag pabaga nalang pg pangutana sa mga classmate para maka apas jud*
>
> (To make sure I do not fall behind, I search on YouTube to figure out how to solve things or head to the library to read books. I try to solve on my own and ask my classmates for help to catch up.)

Informant 8 shared how a specific resource helped them, stating that:

> *Pinaka naka tabang gyud sa akoa maam is katung ginatawag nga si MR. WHY sa youtube sya gyud naka tabang sa akoan maam. Aron if ever tawagon ka maka sabot naka sa concept sa maong discussion question*
>
> (What really helped me, ma'am, was a YouTube channel called Mr. why. It really assisted me in understanding the concepts, so when I get called on, I already know the topic.)

**Ask Help from Teachers.** The theme represents a coping mechanism where students reach out to their teachers when they need extra support or guidance. It is about recognizing that it is okay to not have all the answers and that teachers are there not only to teach, but also to help students overcome challenges. For these students, asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness, it shows their commitment to understanding the material and succeeding. Whether through one-on-one conversations or seeking clarification after class, this theme highlights how students lean on their teachers as a valuable resource, fostering a supportive and open learning environment.

Informant 4 shared how a classmate helped them with learning, stating that:

> *Katong kuan naa man mi irreg na classmate ato dati tapos ni kuan sya iyang mga experience gi tudloan mi pag lantaw lang og youtube kay diha bisan ginagmay anam anam unsoan pag kuan pag sabot maam murag naa pud mi murag tutorial mi nya kanang mag klasi kanang wala mi klasi*
>
> (We had an irregular classmate before, and they shared their experiences with us. They taught us by simply watching YouTube, even small bits at a time. It felt like we were having a tutorial session, even on days when we did not have formal classes.)

**Lack of Knowledge.** The theme reflects the feeling students experience when they realize they do not have enough understanding of a subject or concept. It can be a frustrating and humbling experience, where they might feel behind or unsure of how to catch up. This theme highlights the emotional aspect of learning, the anxiety or self-doubt that comes with not knowing enough, and the pressure to bridge that gap. However, it also reflects an opportunity for growth. Students who recognize their lack of knowledge can take steps to improve, whether through asking for help, doing extra research, or practicing more. Ultimately, this theme speaks to the learning process itself: it is okay to not know everything right away, because understanding comes with time, effort, and support.

Informant 6 expressed feeling unsure about participating, stating that:

> *Lack of confidence maam. Maulaw ko mag participate sa mga activity ug lack of knowledge.*

(My main struggle is a lack of confidence. I feel shy to join activities, and I also lack knowledge in some areas, which makes it harder for me to participate.)

**Action Done to Help Overcome Difficulties in Learning Lesson**

The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 3.2 What do you do to help you overcome your difficulties in learning your lesson? The responses generated four themes: Utilize the Internet, Study Ahead, Self-Study, Ask Questions to Classmates or Teachers.

**Utilize the Internet.** The theme reflects how students tap into the vast resources available online to enhance their learning. When faced with challenges in understanding a topic, these students turn to the internet for extra help, whether it is watching educational videos, reading articles, or exploring online forums where others might share their insights. The internet becomes a tool for self-directed learning, offering flexibility and access to information at their fingertips. This coping mechanism shows a proactive approach to education, where students take ownership of their learning journey and use the digital world to fill in the gaps, make sense of difficult concepts, or even find new ways to engage with the material. It is a testament to the adaptability and resourcefulness that modern students rely on in today's connected world.

Informant 1 shared a strategy for overcoming challenges, stating that:

> *Sa research maam mo lantaw gyud ko sa youtube ug mga tutorials ug mga demo aron makabalo ko. So mao gyud na akaong way kay nag tuon paman pud ko ana, ug sa akoang mga friends sab maam nga ni tabang ug tudlo sa akoa ug nag hatag ug idea ug nag hatag ug mga app kay layu ra baya kaayo ang strand sa akoang course nga g kuha karun.*
>
> (For my research, I watch YouTube tutorials and demos to learn. My friends also help me out by sharing ideas and apps. Since my strand is very different from my current course, I really need their support.)

Informant 3 emphasized the importance of seeking help from classmates, stating that:

> *Mao to pariha atong giingon nako ganina mag search ka end then para makuha nako ang gusto na diskasyon then ing ana mangayog tabang sa classmates ,oo dili maulaw mangutana kay ma fell man pud nako kay naa rako sa ubos maulaw jud ko mangutana kay hawd na kaau sila kaau ako naa rako sa kaun maong maulaw mag communicate ko sa ilaha mao dapat siguro dili nako maulaw nangutana sa ilaha*
>
> (I make sure to search for information and ask my classmates when I need help. I feel shy because I know they are more experienced, but I need to stop feeling embarrassed and just ask.)

Informant 8 highlighted the value of preparation, stating that:

> *Like research sa youtube ug dapat taas gyud ang pasensya maam. Kay didtua nako na realized maam nga dapat prepared gyud ka mag sulod sa klase kay ang uban man gud naa nay mga experience sa ge discus. Kay naa man gud koy classmate na ge pangutana unya wala ka tubag mao ge kasab-an unya wala na ni padayun ug skwela maong dpapat ready gyud ka mag sulod sa klase*

(I rely on YouTube research and patience. I realized that you really need to be prepared when you enter class because some of your classmates already have experience with the material. I had a classmate who could not answer a question and got scolded. It made me realize the importance of being ready for class.)

**Study Ahead.** The theme reflects the proactive approach some students take to stay ahead of their coursework. Instead of waiting for assignments or exams to sneak up on them, these students take the initiative to review material before it is covered in class. This strategy helps them feel more prepared, confident, and less stressed when the lessons begin. It is about giving themselves a head start, ensuring they are not scrambling to catch up later. For these students, studying ahead is a way to take control of their learning, reduce anxiety, and give themselves the space to fully understand and absorb the material at their own pace. It highlights their commitment to success and their desire to stay on top of their academic journey.

Informant 2 emphasized the importance of preparation, stating that:

> *Study ahead of time gyud maam. Kay if mag hulat paka nga e discuss maam magkabuang gyud kag apas sa lesson maam kay ang uban nimo classmate kay naa nay foundation about sa ilahang ge sudlan na course maam.*
> (I study ahead of time, ma'am. If you wait for the lesson to be discussed in class, you will struggle to catch up because some classmates already have a foundation in the course they are taking.)

Informant 6 shared a similar strategy, stating that:

> *Mag advance ug study ug mag takenote sa mga discussions tapus I do some research. Ug mangutana gyud sa mga instractor ug sa mga classmates*
> (I do advance studying and take notes during the discussions. I also do some research and make sure to ask the instructors and my classmates when I need help.)

**Self-Study.** The theme reflects the determination and independence of students who take responsibility for their own learning outside the classroom. These students do not wait for the teacher to cover every detail, they dive into the material on their own, whether it is through textbooks, online resources, or practice problems. Self-study is a way for them to reinforce what they have learned, explore topics more deeply, or catch up on what they might have missed. It is about cultivating a sense of self-motivation and discipline, where students take control of their education, even when no one is looking over their shoulder. This theme highlights their resourcefulness and commitment to mastering the material at their own pace, showing that learning is not just something that happens in class, it is a personal journey they are willing to take on themselves.

Informant 4 expressed their approach with a lighthearted attitude, stating that:

> *Gi usahay gi kaun mag kanang maningkamot nalang jud kog toun toun bisan akoa bisang lisod na gi ampoan dala ampo nalang dala nalang jud ampo oo study*
> (Sometimes, I just try my best and pray about it. But mostly, I focus on studying, even when it is tough.)

Informant 5 shared a more practical approach, stating that:

> *Study studyhan taga subject na lisod kaau nya mag patabang sa mga classmate lanatw sa youtube na unsaon kong lisod kaau mag tabang nalang jud sa maistra mangutana mangutana nya*
>
> (I study each difficult subject and ask my classmates for help. If I am still struggling, I watch tutorials on YouTube or ask the teacher for assistance.)

**Ask Questions to Classmates or Teachers.** The theme represents the approach of students who reach out to others for support when they are struggling with something they do not quite understand. Whether it is a classmate who explains a tricky concept in simpler terms or a teacher who provides further clarification, asking questions becomes a bridge to understanding. For these students, it is not about feeling vulnerable, it is about seeking the help they need to succeed. This theme highlights the value of collaboration and communication in learning, showing that it is okay to lean on others when the path gets unclear. Asking questions is a way to stay engaged, build connections, and ensure they are not left behind, all while reinforcing the idea that learning is a shared experience.

Informant 7 emphasized their usual strategy, stating that:

> *Kuan parihas sa akong giingon ganina maam mangutana ko sa kaong maistra classmate or molantaw ko sa youtube para lang maka cope up*
>
> (Just like I mentioned earlier, I ask my teacher or classmates, or I watch YouTube videos to help me keep up.)

**Things Done to Keep Oneself Engage in School Activities**

The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 3.3 What are the things you do to keep you engage in school activities? The responses generated four themes: Read Books Aligned with My Chosen Course, Have a Support System Within School, Ask Help from Other Classmates, Always Trust Yourself.

**Read Books Aligned with My Chosen Course.** The theme reflects the proactive attitude of students who seek additional knowledge beyond their course materials. These students choose to read books that are directly related to their field of study, helping them deepen their understanding of the subject. It is a way for them to stay ahead, broaden their perspectives, and become more immersed in the topics they are passionate about. By reading relevant books, they not only enhance their academic performance but also cultivate a stronger connection to their chosen career path. This theme highlights their dedication and curiosity, showing how they take ownership of their learning and actively seek resources that will help them grow.

Informant 1 shared their approach to overcoming difficulties, stating that:

> *Kanang mag basa kog books maam nga related sa akoang course kay sa pag take nakog bsedmath. Nangita sab kog maka tabang sa akoa nga maka survive ko sa akoang pag skwela kay kabalo gyud ko na mag lisud ko sa akoang pag swkela kay dili man gud inline ang akoang strand sa seniorhigh sa akoang course karun. Thru research maka kita kog ways aron maka tubag ug maka hatag kog solution.*
>
> (I read books related to my course, especially since I took BSED Math. I also look for ways that can help me survive my studies because I know I will struggle, especially since my senior high strand is not really aligned with my current course. Through research, I find ways to answer questions and provide solutions.)

**Have a Support System Within School.** The theme highlights the importance of having people to turn to for guidance, encouragement, and help during challenging moments in a student's academic journey. This support system could be made up of teachers, classmates, counselors, or even school staff who create a network of care and understanding. For students, knowing they have someone to ask for advice, share concerns with, or just provide reassurance can make a huge difference in how they handle stress or difficulties. It creates a sense of belonging and safety within the school environment, reinforcing the idea that they're not alone in their struggles. This theme emphasizes how emotional and practical support within school can empower students to overcome obstacles and feel more confident in their learning.

Informant 2 shared their approach to supporting others, stating that:

> *Support lang gyud maam. Dili man gud kaayo ko ga engaged sa mga extracurricular activity kay ulawon man gud ko na pagka tao maam. Maong mag support lang gyud ko sa akoang mg aka group especially financially ug emotionally ana gud maam.*
>
> (I do not really engage in extracurricular activities much because I feel shy. So, I just support my group, especially in financial and emotional ways.)

Informant 3 explained how they reach out when struggling, stating that:

> *Kong maglisod najud ko maau kailangan najud kog makig istorya sa ilaha or naa pud koy friends close friends uban mao sila akong doulon kaun naa man koy uban na classmate gikan sa amoa school naa sila sa lain sa section so mao na gusto pud nako na maudto sa ilaha try nalang pud nakog pangutana para dali lang*
>
> (When I am really struggling, I talk to my friends or classmates. Some of them are from the same school as me, but in a different section. I try to ask them for help to make things easier.)

Informant 8 emphasized the importance of friends in their journey, stating that:

> *Friends gihapun maam kay sila man gud naga influence sa akoa gyud. Nga e try lang gyud tanan kay wala man gud daw mawala like aron madungagan imuhang learnings ug ma fail ka atleast kabalo naka unsaon pag solved sunod. Kay with the help of friends dako gyud syag tabang kay gina motivate gyud ko nila to do things like tabangan ko nila ma solved ang problem or question*
>
> (My friends influence me a lot. They encourage me to try everything because even if I fail, at least I learn. With their help, I can solve problems and get better at things.)

**Ask Help from Other Classmates.** The theme reflects the sense of camaraderie and mutual support that can exist among students. When faced with difficulties, these students turn to their peers for help, whether it is to clarify a confusing topic, work through a tricky problem, or simply get a different perspective. Asking for help from classmates shows that learning isn't a solitary journey, it is something that can be shared. It fosters a collaborative environment where students feel comfortable reaching out to one another, building connections, and working together toward success. This theme highlights the power of peer support in creating a more inclusive, supportive, and motivating learning environment.

Informant 4 explained how they try to connect and learn from others, stating that:

*Usahay kanang kuan mangutana ngutana ko sa ilaha man usahay maka sabot sabot mna ko gamay maka kaun maka connect jud ko sa ilaha para sa ilaha ang uban bisan nag lisod ko naa man jud katun an bisna ginagmay ,oo ana maam, patudlo kakang personal mangutana sa ilaha na unsa*

(Sometimes I ask them questions, and I can understand a little bit. I try to connect with them, and even if I struggle, I still learn something, even if it is small. I just ask them personally how to do things.)

Informant 5 shared their strategy for learning and getting help, stating that:

*So mao to gi ignon nako ganina mag pabaga nalang jud pangutana sa classmate mag patabang mao to mag study permi nya lantaw sa youtube sa mga tutorial sa youtube mag basa basa sa library*

(As I mentioned earlier, I just push myself to ask my classmates, seek help, and study constantly. I watch YouTube tutorials and read in the library to get more understanding.)

Informant 7 discussed how they try to support others while also learning, stating that:

*Kuan lang maam mag pabaga og nawong maam para makatabng ko sa akong classmate, kaya nako motabang maam para lang mo supporta sa ilaha maam na Makaya lang pud nako matabang maam*

(I just try to stay confident and help my classmates, even if I am struggling. I believe I can help them, and that support helps me push through as well.)

**Always Trust Yourself.** The theme reflects the inner strength and confidence that students rely on when facing challenges in their education. It is about believing in their own abilities, even when things get tough or when they feel uncertain. Trusting themselves means having the courage to keep going, even if they do not have all the answers right away. It is about recognizing that they are capable of figuring things out and growing through the process, no matter how difficult it may seem. This theme emphasizes the importance of self-belief, showing that students who trust themselves are more likely to overcome obstacles, stay motivated, and continue learning with resilience and confidence.

Informant 6 emphasized the importance of self-reliance and learning through multiple methods, stating that:

*Salig lang sa kaugalingon ug study gyud ug mag lantaw ug mga video tutorials. Kanang maminaw gyud maam aron maka tubag gyud sa mga possible nga mga pangutana sa instractor pakig share ug mga ideas ug participate sa mga classamates*

(I just rely on myself, study hard, and watch video tutorials. I really listen so I can answer any potential questions from the instructor. I also share ideas and participate with my classmates.)

**What are the insights of the mathematically inclined senior high school students who took an alternative strand in senior high school?**

This section presents the results to the 4th major research question; 'What are the insights of the mathematically inclined senior high school students who took an alternative strand in senior high school?' Three specific research questions were used to gather data and information for this major research question. The questions were designed to uncover the insights of the mathematically inclined students

who found themselves in strands that did not match their strengths. The insights shared by the participants shed light on the challenges faced by mathematically inclined students who found themselves in strands that did not align with their strengths. Many of these students felt disconnected from their studies because they were placed in tracks that did not play to their abilities or interests. They expressed a sense of being overlooked, with their potential not fully recognized due to the limited options available to them.

**Factors that Help Students in Sustaining their Studies Despite Taking an Alternative Strand**

The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 4.1 What do you think help a student in sustaining their studies despite taking an alternative strand? The responses generated seven themes: Through Research, Support System, Still Experience Difficulties, Prioritizing Study, Parents Wanted this Course, Staying Focused, Communication is Needed.

**Through Research.** The theme reflects the determination of students who take the initiative to dig deeper into subjects they find challenging or intriguing. Rather than waiting for answers to come to them, they actively seek out additional information, whether through books, online articles, videos, or academic papers. For these students, research becomes a tool to expand their understanding, clarify confusion, or explore new ideas. It shows their commitment to learning beyond the classroom and their ability to independently find the resources that help them succeed. This theme highlights the value of curiosity and persistence in the learning process, reminding us that knowledge is often just a question or search away.

Informant 1 shared how important research is in finding solutions, even when the subject feels disconnected from their background, stating that:

> *Maka help gyud sya nga maka sustain gyud sya ug maka padayun gyud ka*
> *like sa research kung unsa toy mas kuan. Bisag dili sya inline ug pina-agi*
> *sa research maka fined kag solution nga in-anion diay ang pamaagi sa*
> *solving so naay tay makuha thru internet nga mag solution.*
>
> (It really helps to sustain and continue, like through research. Even if it is
> not in line with what I took, through research I can find solutions. The
> internet has a lot to offer in terms of learning and solving problems.)

**Support System.** The theme reflects the network of people who help guide and encourage a student throughout their learning journey. Whether it is family, friends, teachers, or classmates, a strong support system provides emotional reassurance, practical help, and the encouragement needed to navigate academic challenges. For students, knowing they have people to lean on, whether it is for advice, motivation, or just a listening ear, can make all the difference. It creates a sense of security and belonging, reminding them that they are not alone in their struggles. This theme highlights the importance of connection and community, showing how having a reliable support system can empower students to persevere and succeed in their education.

Informant 2 emphasized the importance of support from both family and classmates, stating that:

> *Dapat naa ganiy support sa family maam tapus naa sab support sa mga*
> *classmates maam samot na nga dili sya inline sa akoang strand nga ge kuha*
> *sa seniorhigh. Maningkamot lang gyud ka maam kay naa naman ka dinhaa*
> *tapus imuha nalang sya paningkamutan na mahuman ug* study gyud ka
> dapat ug dili mag luya-luya ug seek advices
>
> (You really need family support, ma'am, and also support from classmates,
> especially when your course is novt aligned with the strand you took in
> senior high. You just have to push yourself, because you are already there,

and you need to do your best. You have to study and not give up, and always seek advice.)

**Still Experience Difficulties.** The theme reflects the honest reality that, despite the efforts and strategies students use, they continue to face challenges in their learning journey. These difficulties may come from a variety of sources, whether it is understanding certain concepts, managing time, or feeling overwhelmed by the pressure to perform. For the participants, this theme shows that learning is not always a smooth path, and struggles are part of the process. It offers insight into their resilience, as they push through these obstacles and keep working toward success, even when things are tough. This theme humanizes the experience of students by acknowledging that difficulties are a natural part of growth and that perseverance is key to overcoming them.

Informant 3 expressed feeling hesitant to participate due to the difficulty in keeping up with classmates, stating that:

> *Maolaw ko kay para nako malisod ko sabay sa akong mga classmates maong dili nlng pod kaayo ko ma apil-apil.*
> (I feel shy because, for me, it is hard to keep up with my classmates, so I do not participate much.)

**Prioritizing Study.** The theme reflects the commitment of students who make their education a top priority in their lives. These students recognize the importance of focusing on their studies, often setting aside other distractions or activities to ensure they can dedicate enough time and effort to learning. Whether it is managing their schedule, creating study routines, or cutting back on social engagements, prioritizing study is about making intentional choices that support academic success. This theme highlights the balance and discipline required to stay focused, showing how students are willing to make sacrifices in order to achieve their goals. It underscores the dedication and drive that come from understanding the value of education and the work it takes to succeed.

Informant 4 shared that prioritizing studying and engaging in advance preparation is essential, stating that:

> *Pag kuan jud maam study jud ang ipa priority pag advance study kailangan ing ana jud buhtaon mao man jud na akong wala na buhat*
> (Really, study should be the priority. You need to do advance studying; that is something I did not do.)

**Parents Wanted this Course.** The theme reflects the experience of students who choose a path that was strongly influenced or even decided by their parents. In some cases, this can create feelings of pressure, as students may feel obligated to follow their parents' wishes, even if their own interests or passions lie elsewhere. For these students, the course they are pursuing may not always align with their personal goals, and they might struggle with motivation or a sense of fulfillment. However, it also speaks to the care and concern parents have for their children's future, as they often want what they believe is best. This theme highlights the complexity of balancing parental expectations with personal desires and the challenge of forging one's own path while respecting family wishes.

Informant 5 expressed a strong desire to continue despite the challenges, motivated by family expectations, stating that:

> *Moa naman jud ni gusto sa akong pamilya nga naay mahimo teacher sa amoa gusto pud nako mi na course maong padayun nalang nak oni paningkamotan bisan unsa ka lisod wala ko ka kaun ani sa senior high wala*

*koy kaalaman ani , gusto nako I improve ngadili tana misis nimo dili kaya nimo nama matun an*

(My family really wants me to become a teacher. I also want this course, so I will keep going, no matter how hard it gets. I did not know much in senior high, but I want to improve and not give up, even when things are tough.)

Informant 7 emphasized perseverance, especially with the support of family, stating that:

*Kanang kaun maa mako ra ikatabang sa akoa maa mako rajud ginikanan maa og orsigihon gihapon nako maam na dili ok sa akoa ma courso sa kaun sa ngalan padayun kog eskwela ako jud padayunon samtang naa pay nag supporta maam*

(My parents are supporting me, and I will keep going. Even though it is hard, I will continue with my studies as long as I have their support.)

**Staying Focused.** The theme reflects the challenge students face in maintaining their attention and motivation, especially when juggling multiple tasks or dealing with distractions. Staying focused means being able to push through moments of boredom, fatigue, or stress, and continue working toward their goals. For many students, it involves creating habits or environments that help them concentrate, like setting aside quiet study time, breaking down tasks into manageable steps, or minimizing distractions. This theme highlights the inner strength and discipline required to stay on track, showing how students develop strategies to stay engaged in their learning, even when it is not always easy. It is about finding ways to keep going, even when the road gets tough.

Informant 6 highlighted the importance of self-discipline and mental strength, stating that:

*Kanang fucos lang gyud ka ug imuha lang gyud e boost imuhang sarili ug magpakatatag lang gyud ka aron mahuman lang gyud nimo imuhang degree.*

(Just focus and boost yourself, stay strong, and finish your degree.)

**Communication is Needed.** The theme reflects the crucial role that open, clear communication plays in a student's learning experience. Whether it is between students and teachers, classmates, or even family members, effective communication helps clarify misunderstandings, share ideas, and provide support. For students, knowing when and how to express their concerns, ask for help, or share their thoughts can make a world of difference in how they navigate challenges. This theme emphasizes that learning is not just about absorbing information, it is also about being able to talk through difficulties, collaborate with others, and ensure everyone is on the same page. Communication fosters connection and understanding, creating a supportive environment where students feel heard, valued, and more confident in their journey.

Informant 8 emphasized the importance of passion, communication, and self-discipline, stating that:

*Para ma sustsin nila maam need nilag communication kay bisag lahi ilahang starnd nga nasugdan sa ilahang ge sudlan karun dapat love nimo ang degree nga imuhang kuhaon maam kay kung love man gud nimo or naa kay passion sa imuhang ge kuha na course daghan kag mga reason nganong mo padayun ka ug nganong need nimo mahuman gyud sya, bisag lisud sya daghan kang mahimong reason nga tarungon gyud sya u gang ika duha is self-discipline. Dapat imuhang huna-huna is dapat humble lang ka sa tanan.*

(To sustain it, you need communication because even though you started with a different strand, you must love the degree you are pursuing. If you love it or have passion for it, you will find many reasons to keep going and to finish, no matter how difficult it is. Self-discipline is key. Also, always stay humble.)

**Ways Students May Do in Order to Keep Their Interest in Their Studies**

The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 4.2 What are the ways students may do in order to keep their interest in their studies? The responses generated four themes: Motivate Oneself, Have a Time Management, Practice Problem Solvings, Love Mathematics.

**Motivate Oneself.** The theme reflects the internal drive that students rely on to push through challenges, especially when external support or encouragement is limited. It is about finding the strength within to keep going, even on days when motivation feels low. For these students, self-motivation involves setting personal goals, celebrating small wins, and reminding themselves of the bigger picture. It is about tapping into their own determination to stay focused and continue working toward success, despite setbacks or difficult moments. This theme highlights the power of self-belief and resilience, showing that sometimes the best source of motivation comes from within, helping students navigate their academic journey with perseverance and confidence.

Informant 1 highlighted the role of self-motivation and personal drive in staying engaged, stating that:

> *Para ma engaged gyud ang bata ug magka interest, nga maga earn gyud ko na maka learn ug maningkamot ka ug e motivate gyud nimo imuhang kaugalingon nga kaya gyud nimo ni course.*
>
> (To really engage and gain interest, you need to work hard and motivate yourself to believe that you can handle this course.)

Informant 2 emphasized gratitude and perspective as key motivators, stating that:

> *Ako man gud maam provided man gud ko tanan. Maong akoa gyud gina huna-huna nga nakaya makaya man gani sa mga working student ako pa kaya nga provided gyud ko maong kayanon gyud pud nako.*
>
> (Since everything is provided for me, I always think if working students can manage, then I, who am fully supported, should definitely be able to handle this too.)

Informant 4 drew strength from family expectations and used it as motivation, stating that:

> *Katong na tine naga lisod ko kay gihunahuna nalang nako kanang gusto ni papa na ing ana ko mag teacher ko maning kamot ko nya,mao to*
>
> (During those times I was struggling, I just kept thinking that this is what my father wants, for me to become a teacher. So, I pushed myself and persevered.)

Informant 6 emphasized future financial stability as a source of motivation, stating that:

> *Huna-hunaon nalang gyud nimo nga inig human nimog skwela dako kag sweldo mao nalang imuhang huna-hunaon aron ma motivate ka sap ag skwela.*
>
> (Just think that after you graduate, you will earn a good salary, that is what you should keep in mind to stay motivated in school.)

**Have a Time Management.** The theme reflects the ability of students to balance their academic responsibilities with other aspects of their life by organizing and prioritizing their time effectively. Students who embrace time management create schedules or plans to ensure they dedicate enough time to study, complete assignments, and even take breaks when needed. It is about finding a rhythm that allows them to stay productive without feeling overwhelmed. For many, good time management is the key to reducing stress and staying on top of their work. This theme highlights the skill of juggling various tasks, showing how students take control of their time to make space for both their academic goals and personal well-being.

Informant 3 highlighted the importance of time management and advance preparation in overcoming struggles, stating that:

> *Akoa jud syang gina taga naa jud koy time management dapat jud akoa syang gina studyhan end then kong unsa man gipa kuan sa among gipabuhat sa instructor is amoa ako jud nang ipa advance gina answeran, kay ako stuggles pud baya ko na dili kaau ko hawd jud sa math kailangan nako mag advance mangutana sa lain*
>
> (I really make sure I manage my time well and study ahead. Whatever tasks the instructor assigns, I make sure to prepare in advance. Since I struggle with math and I am not that good at it, I really need to ask for help from others.)

**Practice Problem Solvings.** The theme reflects the dedication of students who actively work on solving problems to improve their understanding and skills. Rather than just reading or memorizing, these students focus on hands-on practice, whether it is solving math problems, writing essays, or tackling complex scenarios, because they understand that true mastery comes from repetition and application. For them, practicing problems is a way to build confidence, strengthen their knowledge, and prepare for future challenges. This theme highlights the importance of persistence and effort in the learning process, showing that success comes not just from passive learning, but from actively engaging with the material and practicing it until it feels second nature.

Informant 5 shared their strategy for overcoming challenges in math, stating that:

> *Mag practice og solving kay fell nimo dili kya I solve buta kong imo nag ani I solve ma fell jud nimo na nindot kaau ,oo, lisod kaau kong ma solve dayun nimo taga dula pud kog games sa cellphone like kuan diduko chesess math tress ma practice akong math.*
>
> (I practice solving problems because, even though I feel like I cannot solve them, when I eventually figure it out, it feels really great. I also play games like chess and other math-related games on my phone to practice my math skills.)

**Love Mathematics.** The theme reflects the passion and genuine interest some students have for math. For these students, math is not just a subject to be studied, it is something they truly enjoy and feel excited about. They find satisfaction in solving problems, discovering patterns, and understanding how different concepts connect. This love for mathematics often fuels their motivation to go above and beyond, exploring topics on their own, tackling challenging problems, or even pursuing advanced studies. This theme highlights how love for a subject can transform the learning experience, making it less of a chore

and more of a rewarding and engaging journey. For these students, math becomes not just a skill, but a passion that inspires curiosity and growth.

Informant 7 emphasized the importance of loving the subject despite the challenges, stating that:

> *Kuan man ako gihapon I love akong math or unsa ba na subject maam nga related na courso para lang jud maka padayun sa akong eskwela I love nalang jud nako ang kuan na subject na math or anything else paman maam*
> (I just love my math subject or whatever related subject in my course, and that is how I keep going with my studies.)

Informant 8 shared that choosing the BSED Mathematics degree signifies a strong passion for problem-solving and a willingness to embrace challenges, stating that:

> *Kay nikuha mankag degree ug BSED Mathematics meaning love gyud nimo ang solving ug willing ka nga mo fail ug mo solved sa mga problem. Naa kay capability nga ma tubag ug ma survive ang degree nga imuhang g kuha.*
> (Since you took the degree of BSED Mathematics, it means you love solving and are willing to fail and solve problems. You have the capability to answer and survive in the degree you have chosen.)

**Learnings Wanted to Share to Others Facing the Same Challenges**

The themes in this section were coming from the specific research question 4.3 What learning do you want to share to others who also face the same challenges that you experience? The responses generated six themes: Do Not Surrender, Do Not Be Pressured, Do Not Think Negatively, Do Not Lose Hope, Advance Study, Never Stop Learning.

**Do Not Surrender.** The theme reflects the resilience and determination of students who refuse to give up, even when faced with challenges or setbacks in their learning journey. It is about pushing through difficult moments, whether it is struggling with a tough assignment, feeling overwhelmed by exams, or facing self-doubt, and choosing to keep going despite the obstacles. For these students, surrendering is never an option. They find strength in their perseverance, knowing that every challenge is an opportunity to grow and improve. This theme highlights the inner grit and drive that keep students moving forward, showing how resilience, belief in oneself, and a refusal to give up are key to overcoming difficulties and achieving success.

Informant 1 emphasizes the importance of determination and resilience, stating that despite having a different strand in senior high, it should not be a reason to give up on a new course, stating that:

> *Even lahi ang strand nga gi kuha ninyo during seniorhigh dili gyud na basihan nga mag surrender ka kay lahi ang inyuhang g sudlan nga course during collage. Himoang kusog ang strand nga g sudlan nimo kay nakaya gani to nimo nga dili inline sa course nga gusto nimo karun pa kaha. Thru research maka kita kag way kung unsaon pag survive sa imuhang ge kuha na course karun.*
> (Even if the strand you took during senior high is different from the course you are pursuing in college, do not let that be a reason to surrender. Strengthen the strand you took, because you managed it even though it was not aligned with your current course. Through research, you can find ways to survive in your current course.)

Informant 3 reflects on the challenges of pursuing a course that is different from their previous strand, but emphasizes the determination and commitment to continue despite the struggles, stating that:

> *Siguro kay lahi man jud mao to lahi man ako course nakuha but lisod na sugdan naman nako sya maong palahutay end then kanag kaun bisan unsa ni bisag lisod end then daghan kaaug struggle financial mentally is kailangan jud nakog padayun para mahilahutay ani end then kay gusto naman pud nako na course gikan sa mga major subject na lsiod padayun akoa ra sya paningkamotan na mahilahutay*
>
> (Maybe because it is different, that is why it is hard, but I have already started, so I will push through. No matter how difficult it is, I need to continue. There are a lot of struggles, financially and mentally, but I need to push through because I want this course. From the major subjects that are tough, I will continue to work hard for it.)

Informant 7 offers a message of perseverance and support despite challenges in both life and education, stating that:

> *Ah kuan lang jud akong maingon sa ilaha maam padayon lang jud maam bahalag lisod ang kinabuhi or eskwela padayun gihapon maam mintras naa gihapon mo supporta sa ilaha or sa amo or kins aba mao ra maam*
>
> (Just continue, even if life or school is difficult, keep going as long as you have support from others, from your family or anyone around you.)

**Do Not Be Pressured.** The theme reflects the inner strength of students who choose to stay true to themselves, even when external pressures, such as societal expectations, peer comparisons, or family demands, try to influence their choices or actions. For these students, it is about learning how to navigate stress, manage expectations, and make decisions based on their own values and goals, rather than succumbing to pressure. It is a reminder that everyone's journey is unique and that success is not defined by meeting others' standards, but by finding personal fulfillment and balance. This theme highlights the importance of self-awareness, self-confidence, and staying grounded, reminding students that they can move at their own pace without the weight of external pressures holding them back.

Informant 2 emphasizes the importance of managing pressure and having the right approach to challenges, stating that:

> *Kanang dili langka dapat ma pressure sa imuhang ge kuha like sa BSED* Math *gud bisan lahi nga strand imuhang ge kuha sa seniorhigh, kay mo ana gyud na ang math is dili gyud sya pa hawday kundi kung unsaon nimo pag sabot sa maong problem ug unsaon nimo sya pag solved.*
>
> (Do not let yourself be pressured by the course you are taking, like in BSED Math. Even if your strand in senior high was different, math is not about being naturally good at it; it is about how you understand the problem and solve it.)

**Do Not Think Negatively.** The theme reflects the effort of students to maintain a positive mindset, even in the face of challenges or setbacks. It is about choosing to focus on solutions rather than dwelling on problems, and believing in their ability to overcome obstacles instead of letting self-doubt take over. For these students, avoiding negative thinking is a way to preserve their mental and emotional well-being, helping them stay motivated and focused on their goals. This theme highlights the power of positive

thinking as a tool for resilience, showing that when students believe in their potential and approach challenges with optimism, they are better equipped to handle whatever comes their way.

Informant 4 highlights the importance of staying positive and not letting struggles discourage you, stating that:

> *Kanag kuan maam padayun lang tapos dili jud kuan ma kuan sa sarili mag*
> *buhat og negative bo bisan nagalisod*
> (Just keep going, and do not let yourself think negatively, even when you
> are having difficulties.)

**Do Not Lose Hope.** The theme reflects the unwavering determination of students who, even in tough times, hold onto the belief that things will get better. It is about staying hopeful and focused on the possibility of improvement, even when faced with difficulties, setbacks, or moments of doubt. For these students, hope becomes a source of strength, reminding them that challenges are temporary and success is still within reach. This theme highlights the emotional resilience and courage needed to keep moving forward, even when the road seems uncertain. It shows that as long as students continue to believe in themselves and their goals, they can navigate through hard times and emerge stronger on the other side.

Informant 5 emphasizes that strand differences between senior high and college are not obstacles, stating that:

> *Dili jud sya hadlang ang kanang kuan lahi na strand imong gikuha katong*
> *sa senior high ka og karon, sa collage na sa collage dili man pa bright tay*
> *sa collage ng pa daskartehay man pa survival man dili mna pa brightay*
> *mag tinabangay nalang ana mahinalutay ,oo,kanang dili jud mawal an og*
> *pag laom kaya ra ang tanan*
> (Your strand from senior high does not really matter in college. It is not
> about being the brightest, it is about surviving and working together. Never
> lose hope; everything is possible.)

**Advance Study.** The theme reflects the proactive approach some students take by going beyond what is required in their courses and delving deeper into the material before it is formally introduced. These students recognize the value of being ahead of the curve, whether by reviewing upcoming topics, researching related subjects, or preparing for future lessons. This approach helps them build a stronger foundation, increase their confidence, and ease the pressure when the material is officially covered in class. For them, advancing their studies is not just about getting ahead, it is about enriching their learning experience, staying curious, and feeling prepared. This theme highlights how taking initiative in one's education can lead to greater understanding and personal growth, showing that learning is a continuous journey of exploration.

Informant 6 highlights the importance of early preparation and research before entering college, stating that:

> *Ako sauna nga nag SeniorHigh pako nag advance nako nag research*
> *nakokung unsay possible ug dili nako mag lisud sapag sulod sa collage.*
> *Naa nakoy awareness kung unsay akoang kuhaon gyud. Kung tama bagyud*
> *akoang ge sudlan na course. If lahi inyuhang strand sa SH ug lahi na sa*
> *collage dili nalang huna-hunaon nga lisud ang e mindset nalang is*
> *mahuman gyud kay ug mag advance nalang kag research kung unsa nga*
> *course ilahang kuhaon.*

(Before college, I advanced my research on possible courses so I would not struggle. I already had awareness about what to take and whether it was the right course for me. If your strand in senior high differs from what you are doing in college, do not think of it as a difficulty. Just keep the mindset that you will finish, and do research to prepare for the course you are taking.)

**Never Stop Learning.** The theme reflects the mindset of students who view learning as an ongoing journey, not limited to the classroom or textbooks. For these students, education goes beyond formal lessons; it is about constantly seeking knowledge, whether through reading, experiencing new things, or challenging themselves with new ideas. It is about staying curious, asking questions, and being open to growth, no matter where they are in life. This theme highlights the importance of a lifelong commitment to learning, showing that growth does not have a finish line. Students who embrace this mindset understand that every experience offers an opportunity to learn, and that the pursuit of knowledge is a continuous, rewarding process.

Informant 8 emphasizes the importance of continuous learning and growth mindset, stating that:

> *Akoa lang e share nga never stop learning lang siguro like if naa kay dili masabtan ayaw dayun ka discourage ana nga mamali dapat ma motivate paka nga matubag ug ma correct nimo ang imuhang kamalian, dapat e set nato atuang mindset na kaya gani sa uban dapat kaya sab nato. Dapat ma realized gyud nato nga dili ta pwede mag stop sa atuang gusto. Kay if dika kabalo ani nga concept do the research aron maka learn nga in-anion diay ana gud mam. Kay karun daghan naman gud ug ways like internet nga very accessable kaayo.*

> (Never stop learning. If there is something you do not understand, do not get discouraged when you make mistakes. Instead, be motivated to correct them. Set your mindset to believe that if others can do it, you can too. Realize that you cannot stop pursuing what you want. If you do not know a concept, do the research to learn it. Nowadays, there are many accessible ways to learn, especially with the internet.)

**Chapter IV**
**DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION**

This chapter offers the results, analysis, and recommendations based on the research aimed at understanding the experiences of senior high school graduates with a mathematical bent who decided to follow other paths. Particularly in terms of addressing educational mismatches that could hinder their development and success, the knowledge gained from these students offers a practical basis for improving guidance and support systems.

To gather rich and important information, the researcher carefully selected eight participants using deliberate sampling. Although all of the participants were graduates of New Kapatagan National High School, they were all mathematically inclined but assigned to or chose strands that did not directly play to their mathematical aptitudes. Included were male and female students enrolled in higher education institutions for the academic year 2025–2026. The study also looked at their socioeconomic backgrounds to help one better grasp the setting of their experiences.

To completely understand their points of view, the study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design. This approach helped the researcher to record the participants' real-life experiences and gain understanding of how they managed to be in a strand unrelated to their academic interests. Data were gathered using participant observation, focus groups, and individual in-depth interviews (IDI). These methods allowed the data to be triangulated such that the outcomes were assured to be reliable, credible, and true of the participants' real situation.

This chapter is presented in line with the order of the used research questions for the interviews. From the challenges they encountered to the coping strategies they used to finally the insights they provided from negotiating an academic path that did not first fit their strengths, this framework helps to guarantee a clear and coherent flow of the participants' voices and experiences.

**Discussions**

The participant insights and the arranged themes gave the structure for extending the analysis of the results. The careful links between each theme and relevant literature and past research allowed one to investigate more fully how the participants' experiences matched what was already known. Through this, the discussion not only detailed the participants' experiences but also positioned their stories in a more general scholarly and practical perspective. This approach helped to underline the significance and relevance of their experiences by validating their voices via the prism of accepted research.

**Reasons in Taking Alternative Strand in Senior High School.** Many high school students do not always get to choose the strand they want to study. Instead of picking what they like or what they are good at, they often go with what their school offers or what their friends are picking. This situation shows a bigger problem: students are making choices that will change their lives because of social pressures, money problems, or limited access, not because they are passionate about something or have long-term goals. These choices could have lasting effects on their motivation, performance, and job satisfaction in the future.

In areas where only a few strands are offered, like rural or low-income communities, students do not have many chances to look into other options. Many people choose strands like the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) track not because it fits their skills or goals, but because it is cheaper or more useful for their situation. This corroborates the conclusions of Lokoyel (2019) and Rosvall et al. (2018), who observed that students from disadvantaged backgrounds often base their decisions more on what is readily available and accessible rather than on what is personally meaningful to them. Gonzales and Digo (2024) also talked about how money plays a big role in choosing a strand, especially in communities where short-term financial needs are more important than long-term educational goals.

Also, friends make it even harder to make decisions. A lot of students say that choosing a strand is more about where they feel safe and accepted than about what they are good at. Teenagers who value social belonging highly may feel especially pressured to do what their friends do. Research conducted by Moneva and Malbas (2019) and Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) corroborates this assertion, illustrating the substantial impact of peer influence on strand selection. Friends can help students feel better, but sometimes their influence makes them give up on their true interests to fit in.

In the end, deciding to pursue a different strand is not always a free choice. It is affected by both practical limitations and emotional needs, showing that students need more help and guidance to make choices that accurately reflect their skills and goals.

**Factors Influenced in Taking an Alternative Strand in Senior High School**. The emerging themes were to enhance skills, my sibling funded my schooling, financial problem, influenced by group of friends, to help parents in farming, influenced by family. A lot of Senior High School students pick a strand based on what they think is useful or necessary for their current situation, not on what they like or are good at. Family responsibilities, money problems, and the emotional need for support and connection all have a big impact on their choices, which go beyond just what they like in school. While these choices are sensible, they could lead students to pursue paths that do not truly reflect their identities or capabilities. This has a clear meaning: students are often in situations where their real potential is put behind survival, loyalty, or convenience.

Many students said they chose different strands to improve their practical skills, not because they were good at math or other subjects. They believed that practical skills, such as electronics or animation, could be advantageous in everyday life or facilitate employment opportunities. This supports Sarmiento's (2020) findings, which showed that students often choose skill-based strands because they prepare them for jobs and have real-world uses.

In some cases, a sibling's help with money led students to do what they did. They followed their sibling's advice even though it did not match their own goals because they respected and were grateful to them. This shows how family can affect academic choices, especially when money is involved. Gonzales and Digo (2024) say that this kind of thing happens all the time, with students changing their plans based on who is paying for their education.

Another important factor was having trouble with money. A lot of students did not have the money to sign up for or travel to schools that had the strands they wanted. They used what was close by and not too expensive. This corroborates the conclusions of Rosvall et al. (2018) and Lokoyel (2019), who observed that financial constraints often hinder students' educational access, forcing them to prioritize cost over personal alignment.

Peer pressure was another strong factor. Some students admitted that they made choices that weren't in their best interest just to feel supported or not alone. Teenagers' friendships are very important, but they can also lead them off course. Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) and Moneva and Malbas (2019) say that friendships have a big effect on academic choices at this point in life.

Some students also chose classes that would help them farm while still being close to home. This shows that you care about your family and have a strong sense of duty. They were able to do their schoolwork and chores at home at the same time. This aligns with Dela Cruz's (2021) research, which found that many rural students make their educational decisions based on their ability to continue supporting their families.

Last but not least, family influence went beyond just giving money. Parents and older siblings often suggested strands based on their own beliefs or values. In a culture like the Philippines, where family ties are very strong, this kind of advice is not only common but also expected. Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) assert that in collectivist societies, familial decision-making often supersedes individual preferences regarding education.

These experiences all show that people do not usually choose their senior high school strand in a vacuum. To help students find the right paths for them, we need to understand and deal with the complicated web of social, economic, and emotional factors that shape them.

**Ways Oneself Treat One's Study Amid Taking Alternative Strand**. The emerging themes were use it as a preparation, embrace the journey, took studies seriously, uphold my strand. It is easy to think that students feel lost or disappointed when they are put in a strand that is not their first choice. But a lot of

them choose a different answer. They want to find meaning in their current journey instead of dwelling on the past. This shows a lot of strength and growth. This means that even though students may not have many choices because of their situation, how they think about the experience can change what it means to them. They show a level of maturity that people often miss when they see how well they can adapt, stay positive, and make the most of what they have.

Some students said that they saw their strand as a way to get to something bigger, not as a mistake. Even though the strand did not show off their math skills, they worked hard to develop habits like self-study, research, and discipline. These habits helped them get ready for the academic challenges that were about to come, especially in college. Arturo and Arturo (2020) found that the Senior High School curriculum was meant to give students the basic skills they would need for either a job or more school, as well as prepare them for specific careers.

A lot of students decided to accept their situation and do their best instead of feeling stuck or angry. They learned that there are other ways to do well besides staying on the "perfect" path. It's more important how much heart and effort they put into their work. This attitude is in line with research by Brown and Smith (2012), who found that students who are strongly motivated from within are still more involved and productive even when they are taking classes they did not choose.

Some people thought they could connect the content of their strand with what they were interested in. They worked hard in school to support their families and reach their goals, as well as to feel good about themselves. Abdo and Majid (2016) say that students can do well in tough school settings if they are passionate and do not give up.

Some students even went so far as to completely accept their strand. They were proud of what they had and did not want to waste the chance. It became a source of strength for them. They wanted to show that they could succeed no matter where they came from. Sierra (2020) says that this kind of resilience has a big effect on how well students do in school. Students are more likely to find success and meaning along the way when they fully commit to their path, even if it was not their first choice. These stories show that many students are not just getting by despite the challenges they face. They are growing, learning, and becoming better versions of themselves.

**Struggles of Mathematically-Inclined Student Who Took an Alternative Strand in One's Study.** The emerging themes were hard time understanding lessons, there is pressure, did not experience struggles, different learning environment. It is easy to think that students who end up in a strand that wasn't their first choice feel lost or discouraged. But a lot of them choose to respond in a different way. They do not think about what could have been; instead, they look for meaning in where they are now. This shows a strong sense of strength and growth as a person. This means that even though students may not have many options, the way they think about their experiences can change how they feel about them. Their maturity, which is often overlooked, is shown by how well they can adapt, stay hopeful, and make the most of what they have.

Some students said that they did not see their strand as a mistake, but as a way to get to something better. Even though the strand did not show off their math skills, they worked on building habits like self-study, research, and discipline. These habits helped them get ready for future academic challenges, especially in college. This is similar to what Arturo and Arturo (2020) said, which was that the Senior High School program was made to teach students not only how to do certain jobs but also how to get ready for college or work.

Many students chose to accept their situation and do their best instead of feeling stuck or angry. They knew that there are other ways to be successful besides being on the "perfect" track. The most important thing is how much work and heart they put into what they do. Brown and Smith (2012) found that students who are highly motivated from within stay more engaged and productive even when they are put in classes they did not choose. This attitude is in line with those findings.

Some people thought that their hard work could help them bridge the gap between their interests and the content of their strand. They worked hard in school not only for their own sake, but also to help their families and reach their goals. Abdo and Majid (2016) agree with this. They said that students can do well in school even when things are hard if they are passionate and determined.

Some students went even further and fully embraced their strand. They were proud of what they had and did not want to waste the chance. It became a source of strength for them. They wanted to show that they could do well no matter where they started. Sierra (2020) pointed out that this kind of resilience is very important for doing well in school. Students are more likely to find meaning and success along the way when they fully commit to their path, even if it was not their first choice.

These stories show that even though there are problems, many students are not just getting by; they are growing, learning, and becoming better versions of themselves.

**Difficulties in Learning Lessons in Chosen Track.** The emerging themes were course not aligned, teacher's expectation, no difficulties, hard time understanding mathematics lessons. When students are put in a strand that does not fit with their natural strengths or future goals, it can have a big impact on how well they learn. For people who like math but end up in arts or ICT because their school does not offer enough math classes, the disconnect is not just academic; it is also emotional. They might feel frustrated, unmotivated, or even discouraged because they know that what they are learning now will not help them in the future. The implication is serious: if a student's skills do not match their academic path, it can hurt their confidence, make them less interested in school, and make them feel unprepared for college-level expectations.

A lot of students say that their current strand does not match their math skills. Some students wanted to take a lot of math classes in college, but they ended up in classes that do not help them with that. Because they do not line up, it is harder for them to stay interested or to find meaning in what they are learning. Martinez and Lee (2013) note that students assigned to courses they did not select frequently encounter regret and face challenges both emotionally and academically.

In the classroom, this mismatch is even harder to deal with when teachers think students already know some lessons. Students who do not have the right background often feel bad or scared about speaking up. Some people choose to stay quiet instead of risking being judged. It is not unusual for teachers to put this kind of pressure on students. Salmela-Aro and Upadyaya (2014) say that when students have high expectations but are not ready, it can make them anxious and eventually stop them from learning.

But not every student thinks the experience is bad. Some people adapt quickly or find that the lessons stay at a level they can handle. Some people even see it as a chance to learn something new that is not related to what they usually do. This is similar to what Abdo and Majid (2016) say: students who are very motivated can still do well, even if the path is not perfect, because they have personal goals or want to grow.

However, the effects of strand mismatch can last for a long time. Even students who are good at math may have trouble in college if they did not get the right foundation in Senior High School. Advanced topics are more difficult to grasp without prior preparation. Johnson et al. (2015) say that students who are put in

classes that do not fit their academic needs often feel more stressed and do worse later on. These stories remind us that giving students better choices and making them feel seen and supported can have a big impact on both their schoolwork and their confidence in the future.

**Hindrance in Engaging in School Activities**. The emerging themes were not knowledgeable enough, too shy to participate, lack of understanding. Putting students in a strand that does not fit their strengths or interests can really hurt their confidence and make them less likely to want to do things at school. The feeling of being unprepared compared to others makes you feel alone. Many students do not want to join because they are afraid, they will not have the right answers or that they will embarrass themselves. This uncertainty can prevent them from fully engaging in the school experience, academically, socially, and emotionally. It is clear what this means: when students do not feel like they belong in their strand, it stops them from growing, expressing themselves, and making friends.

Some students say they do not want to join school activities, especially if they involve things that make them uncomfortable. They often feel unprepared or less capable than their classmates because their strand does not support the college course they want to take. Brown and Smith (2012) say that students who are taking classes that do not match their skills often drop out because they do not feel confident or know enough.

Being shy is also a big part of it. A lot of students are afraid to speak up or ask questions because they do not want to be judged or make a mistake. This fear is usually a mix of who you are and how well you know the subject. Teenagers can be very self-conscious, and when they are not sure of what they know, it makes it even harder for them to speak up. They might not get the help they need if they are unsure about asking for it, even if they want to learn.

Some people want to join in, but they do not know enough about the material to make a meaningful contribution. They have a hard time following the lessons or joining discussions if they do not have the right background, especially in math or other technical subjects. Martinez and Lee (2013) noted that students assigned to strands they did not select are more prone to encounter such challenges, potentially diminishing their motivation and engagement in school.

These students have a lot of potential; they just need the right help and preparation to be able to succeed with confidence. By knowing this, schools and teachers can make their classrooms more welcoming and understanding, where every student feels like they have something important to give.

**Ways in Coping with Struggles in School**. The emerging themes were internet connection problem, always ask questions, do research, ask help from teachers, lack of knowledge. When students come from rural or remote areas, their learning journey often starts with problems that go beyond the classroom. They have trouble keeping up because they have a slow internet connection, limited access to digital tools, and few academic resources. This is especially true when they are already trying to learn things that are not their strong suit. This means that students from these areas have an unfair fight to succeed if they do not have the right infrastructure and support. Their problems are not because they cannot do things; they are because they do not have the chance to do them. If you do not show them empathy and take action, that gap can grow quickly.

Students frequently express that unreliable internet connectivity hampers their ability to participate in online classes, conduct research, or submit assignments punctually. These setbacks are especially hard for people who are trying to catch up on new topics in a strand that does not help them with the college course they want to take. Yeboah Appiagyei et al. (2014) say that bad infrastructure, like not having enough internet access or digital tools, makes it very hard for people in poor communities to learn.

Even so, a lot of students are very brave. They start asking questions, even when they feel shy or unsure, which is not always easy for them. They learn that asking teachers or classmates for help can help them understand lessons better and stay on track. Abdo and Majid (2016) agree with this idea. They say that students are more interested in learning when they take the lead and that asking for help is an important part of taking charge of their education.

Some students study on their own to make up for what their strand did not teach them. They use YouTube, educational apps, and online articles to help them get ready for college by filling in the gaps between what they learned in Senior High School and what college expects of them. Martinez and Lee (2013) stress how important these strategies are by saying that students who do not have a strong academic background can learn more by looking for extra learning tools outside of the classroom.

Some students get stronger by being honest with their teachers. Just telling a teacher that you are having trouble often gets you help, advice, and understanding. That simple connection makes students feel less alone. Johnson et al. (2015) say that having supportive relationships with teachers lowers anxiety and makes students feel more in charge of their learning.

In the end, a lot of students say that the biggest problem they face is not being ready for college because their strand does not match their college course. But what really stands out is that they will not give up. They figure out how to adapt by motivating themselves, getting help from friends, and using online resources. Bridgeland, DiIulio, and Rotermund (2007) say that academic gaps can be discouraging, but with the right strategies and support systems, students can not only stay afloat but also move forward with a clear goal.

**Action Done to Help Overcome Difficulties in Learning Lesson**. The emerging themes were utilize the internet, study ahead, self-study, ask questions to classmates or teachers. When students are in a strand that does not fit with their strengths or future goals, they may feel like they cannot keep up with the learning. You might not know the topics, the pace might be too fast, and you might start to doubt yourself. But what really stands out is how many students choose to respond with determination instead of frustration. This means that students can still do well in school even if the environment does not match their skills, as long as they are resourceful and take the initiative. Their work shows a quiet strength that comes from more than just knowledge; it also comes from sticking with it and being open to change.

Many students go online for help with their problems. They look at YouTube tutorials, demo videos, and recorded lectures to learn more about hard subjects. These online tools let them study at their own pace and go over lessons as many times as they need to. This shows that you can be both strong and flexible. Abdo and Majid (2016) say that students are more motivated to learn when they use resources that fit their own learning style or interests. This is especially important when the material is new or not well-known.

Some students go even further and study ahead of time. They plan their lessons ahead of time so they can keep up with students who already know more about the subject. This extra work takes some of the stress off of school and helps them feel more sure of themselves in class. Nyamwange (2016) stresses that this kind of initiative and interest can help students do better in school, especially if they are not doing well.

For many people, self-study becomes a regular part of their lives. Students watch lectures, work on problems repeatedly, or read about things until they understand them better. Over time, this method helps them become more independent and more sure of themselves. Sierra (2020) says that motivation can greatly affect how well a student does, even in a subject that is not their first choice.

Students often ask for help in addition to using digital tools and studying on their own. They ask their classmates or teachers for help when they do not understand something. This openness not only helps

them understand better, but it also makes them more involved in class. Bakar et al. (2014) agree with this, saying that help from teachers and classmates is very important for students who are having trouble learning and want to feel more sure of themselves. These efforts show that students can get through mismatched academic placements if they have the right attitude. Their stories are not just about how to deal with a tough situation; they are also about how to turn it into a chance to grow.

**Things Done to Keep Oneself Engage in School Activities**. The emerging themes were read books aligned with my chosen course, have a support system within school, ask help from other classmates, always trust yourself. Students can use their mindset and the environment around them to help them when they are having trouble with a strand that does not fully match their interests or strengths. Staying motivated, gaining confidence, and getting help can all make a big difference in how they deal with things and grow. This means that a student's academic placement is important, but their own hard work, emotional strength, and social connections can help them not only survive but also do well. These internal and external sources of strength give students a sense of purpose and direction, even when things are not going well.

Reading books about the field they are interested in is one way for students to stay on track with their goals. Even if their current strand does not match their dream course, learning about things that interest them keeps their curiosity alive. It gives them a reason to work harder and a stronger sense of purpose. Students do better when they are really interested in what they are learning. Shertzer and Stone (2003), along with Edward and Quinter (2012), say that students who look into subjects that fit their interests and personalities tend to do better and have a better idea of what they want to do with their careers.

Emotional support is just as important. Students stay emotionally stable when they have people they can count on, like friends, mentors, or teachers. This is especially true when things get tough. A strong support system can help you feel better, give you hope, and help you with everyday tasks. Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) discovered that peer support can be equally impactful as familial influence regarding educational decisions. Moneva and Malbas (2019) also show that having classmates who are there for you makes you feel more sure of yourself and safe in your schoolwork.

Getting help from classmates does more than just help you understand; it also makes you feel like you are part of a group. Students are more interested and less anxious when they feel safe enough to speak up and ask questions. Koech et al. (2016) stress that when students interact with each other, especially when they help each other, they are more likely to participate in class and be more interested in what they are learning. Above all, it is important to have faith in yourself. Students are more likely to keep going when things get hard if they believe in themselves. Believing in themselves helps them stay on task, take charge, and deal with stress better. Brown and Smith (2012) say that having inner drive and confidence is important for doing well in school, especially when students do not have much outside help or when they run into problems.

Success is not just about being in the right strand in the end. It is also about staying focused on your goals, asking for help, and believing that you can handle whatever comes your way. These are the things that help students do well in school and in life.

**Factors that Help Students in Sustaining their Studies Despite Taking an Alternative Strand**. The emerging themes were through research, support system, still experience difficulties, prioritizing study, parents wanted this course, staying focused, communication is needed. When students end up in a strand they did not choose, they often feel a mix of emotions. They might feel alone, angry, or unsure about what will happen next. But a lot of people do not give up. They try to figure out what is going on and how to

make it meaningful. This suggests that being put in a strand that does not fit can be hard on both your emotions and your schoolwork, but it can also be a turning point. With the right attitude, help, and ways to deal with stress, students can stay grounded, find their motivation again, and move forward with a goal. A lot of students do research to figure out how their current course can still help them in the future. They think about how to connect what they are learning now to their own goals, read about the real-world value of their subjects, and look into different career paths. This process of self-exploration helps them find their way again. Bubic (2014) and Ahmed (2014) say that students tend to get their motivation back and feel more in control when they actively look into and make sense of their academic path.

Help from other people can also be a lifeline. When students are feeling down or unsure, it helps to know that they can talk to someone, like a friend, teacher, or family member. Encouragement helps people feel better about themselves and less unsure. Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) and Moneva and Malbas (2019) both show how support from peers and mentors can help students make better choices, especially when they are going through changes in their studies.

Many students, however, say that even with these coping strategies, the experience is still very hard. Being in a strand that does not match their passion can make them feel bad. They have days when they do not feel like doing anything, when they are confused, or when they are burned out. Johnson et al. (2015) and Liu and Wang (2018) both found that when students do not see a clear link between what they are learning now and their future goals, it can be frustrating and make them less interested in school.

Even though these problems exist, some students respond with quiet determination. They put their studies first, do their best, and are open to what their strand might bring. They know that hard work and dedication can still pay off. Abdo and Majid (2016), along with Brown and Smith (2012), stress that students who are motivated from within are more likely to stay interested and do well, even if they are not on the right path.

Another thing that affects how students act is what their parents do. Some people stay in their current strand because their parents think it will give them stability or good job prospects. For these students, the expectations of their families become a reason to keep going. Cheng and Lam (2013) and Park and Kim (2015) both found that parents' beliefs often affect educational choices, especially in cultures where family opinion is very important. Students learn to concentrate in order to stay grounded. They keep their eyes on their long-term goals, even when things do not go exactly as planned. They tell themselves that where they start doesn't have to be where they end up.

Most importantly, many students feel better when they can talk to each other. Talking about what they are going through helps them deal with their feelings and get help. Talking honestly with parents, teachers, or classmates can help you make better decisions and get back on track. Koech et al. (2016) back this up by saying that talking to other students, especially peers, can help them stay interested and make better choices in school. In the end, even if the journey does not start out as planned, students show that they can still make a path that feels meaningful and their own with hard work, support, and self-awareness.

**Ways Students May Do in Order to Keep Their Interest in Their Studies**. The emerging themes were motivating oneself, managing time, practicing problem-solving solvings, and loving mathematics. When students have trouble with schoolwork, especially in a subject that does not match their strengths or interests, they often keep going because of something inside them. It is not always about grades or the pressure to do well; it is also about having a purpose, goals, and a sense of meaning. This means that students are more likely to stay interested and get through tough times when they are motivated by

something personal that is important to them. Their motivation is what keeps them going, even when things get too much for them.

For a lot of students, their self-motivation comes from their own dreams, a future job, or the desire to make their family proud. It becomes their motivation to show up, try, and care. Brown and Smith (2012) say that students who are driven by strong internal motivation are more likely to be interested in their studies and do well. Abdo and Majid (2016) also stress the importance of real interest. They show that when students are really interested in what they are learning, they stay committed and consistent, even when the lessons are hard.

Another important thing is the time management. When students are in charge of their own schedules, they do not have to worry about doing work at the last minute. They can study and rest better when they have a plan, and it gives them a sense of order. This structure not only helps you stay disciplined, but it also keeps you from getting burned out. Even though you do not name the reference directly in your note, research shows that having a routine and managing your time well can help your mental health and keep you interested in school.

Problem-solving is also a very important part of making learning meaningful. Students often get energy from the challenge itself, whether they are working on math problems, science questions, or everyday problems. When they figure something out, they feel good about themselves and stay interested. Alexander et al. (2011) back this up by saying that students who like solving problems are more likely to stick with it and become more interested in the subject.

For some students, this passion is especially strong when it comes to math. They say it is a fun challenge, like a puzzle to figure out. This kind of passion not only helps them do better in school, but it also affects their choices about the future, such as what career to pursue in engineering, programming, or IT. Zing (2007) and Shertzer and Stone (2003) discovered that students who have a genuine interest in math are more inclined to pursue and excel in math-related professions. These stories show that motivation, time management, problem-solving, and passion are not just good study habits; they are also ways to stay alive. They keep students going when things get tough and help them see how important learning is, even when things do not go as planned.

**Learnings Wanted to Share to Others Facing the Same Challenges**. The emerging themes were do not surrender, do not be pressured, do not think negatively, do not lose hope, advance study, never stop learning. When students think about the hard times they have had in a strand that is not their first choice, one clear message comes through: do not give up. Their stories are not just about schoolwork and grades; they are also about strength, determination, and the quiet bravery it takes to keep going when things are hard. The implication is that intelligence and ability alone do not guarantee academic success. It is just as much about your attitude, your emotional balance, and learning how to keep hope alive when things get tough. These lessons are very human, and they remind us that we often grow when things are hard.

Many students say that dealing with stress and problems has helped them grow. They know how easy it is to lose motivation, especially when school or family is putting pressure on them. But they also know that being persistent helps them make progress, even if it is only a little bit at a time. They want people to know that it is okay to go at your own pace and not be held back by what others expect of you. Kim and Park (2016) agree with this idea, saying that too much pressure can make people stressed and less motivated. Letting go of those hopes can make room for peace, clarity, and the ability to direct yourself.

Students also stress how important it is to stay positive. They say that thinking too much about failure or comparing themselves to others only makes things worse. Choosing to be kind to themselves and have

hope instead helps them move forward. Brown and Smith (2012) say that having a positive attitude is closely linked to being more engaged and doing well in school. It is easier for students to keep learning and growing when they learn to be kind to themselves.

Hope is a big part of keeping students on track, especially when things do not go as planned. It makes them think that things will get better and that what they are doing now will lead to something good. Salmela-Aro and Upadyaya (2014) discovered that hope safeguards students against stress and diminishes the likelihood of attrition. It gives them strength of mind and helps them stay focused on their goals.

A lot of students say that studying ahead is a good way to get ready. They feel more ready and sure of themselves in class when they watch tutorials, read extra materials, or practice lessons on their own. Bubic (2014) and Sierra (2020) say that students who take charge of their own learning become more motivated and feel like they have more control over their academic progress.

Lastly, students want people to know that learning does not stop when school ends. Learning that matters lasts for the rest of your life. It happens when you make small discoveries, try new things, and choose to keep learning even when you are not in class. Arturo and Arturo (2020) and Abdo and Majid (2016) stress the importance of lifelong learning, not just for passing tests but also for personal growth and future opportunities. These thoughts show that students are not just trying to get through school; they are learning how to live with purpose, bravery, and kindness. Their lessons are honest, hopeful, and based on what they have been through.

**Implications for Practice**

The results of this study highlight several areas where support systems, school policies, and educational practices can be improved to better support students placed in strands that do not align with their interests or strengths. While many students show resilience and find ways to cope, their experiences point to real gaps that schools and educators must address.

*On Reasons in Taking Alternative Strand in Senior High School.* A lot of students did not pick their strand because they were interested in it; instead, they did it because there were not many options at their school or because their friends did. This shows how important it is to give students more academic choices and better career advice. To fix this, schools and the Department of Education should work together to make sure that a wider range of strands is available, especially in areas that do not have many options. School leaders and guidance counselors should start holding regular orientation and career awareness programs in junior high school. Students can make choices that are right for them by giving them timely information and personalized help. This will give them more confidence and satisfaction in their academic journey.

*On Factors Influenced in Taking an Alternative Strand in Senior High School.* A lot of students chose their strands not because they wanted to, but because they were having money problems, their family or friends were putting pressure on them, or it was just the easiest thing to do at the time. This shows that we need better support systems that go beyond the classroom. The Department of Education and local governments should make it easier for students to get scholarships and other forms of financial aid. Schools should also make sure that students and their families can talk to each other freely. School guidance counselors and teachers can help make sure that decisions are made with both heart and understanding by organizing orientation events where both parents and students can look into career paths together.

*On Ways Oneself Treat One's Study Amid Taking Alternative Strand.* Some students, even when they were put in a strand that did not match their interests at first, chose to embrace the path, study hard, and be proud of their journey. Their stories show us that we can still grow and be successful if we have the right

attitude. But this also shows how important it is for students to have mentors, get thoughtful feedback, and have time to think about what they are learning to help them find meaning in it. Teachers and guidance counselors should hold regular mentoring sessions and activities that make students think about how their current experiences relate to their future goals. Students are more likely to do well when they feel supported and understood, no matter where they started.

*On Struggles of Mathematically-Inclined Student Who Took an Alternative Strand in One's Study.* Many students had trouble understanding the lessons and getting used to a new classroom, especially when they were put in groups that did not really fit them. This shows how hard the transition can be without the right help. Schools should think about offering remedial classes or bridging programs to help these kids catch up and feel better about their learning. Teachers are an important part of this process and should be taught how to spot signs of silent struggle early on. They can help students feel seen, supported, and able to move forward by working with school leaders and guidance counselors to provide timely interventions.

*On Difficulties in Learning Lessons in Chosen Track.* Students often had problems because their teachers had unrealistic expectations, they did not know enough about math, and there was a clear mismatch between the strand they chose and the college course they wanted to take. These problems can make students feel like they cannot handle it and are not ready. To fix this, the curriculum needs to be carefully reviewed, especially in science and math, where technical skills are very important. The Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education should work closely with school leaders and college teachers to make sure that all students, no matter what they are studying, get the knowledge and skills they need for their next steps. They can give every student a fair and good chance to succeed if they work together.

*On Hindrance in Engaging in School Activities.* Some students said they skipped class or did not say anything because they were unsure, shy, or scared of making mistakes. These feelings are often caused by not being sure of yourself and being afraid of what other people will think. Schools should make programs and activities that are open to everyone and help students build their confidence so they feel safe speaking up and being themselves. Teachers can make their classrooms emotionally safe by being patient, encouraging, and open to all voices. This is more than just teaching. Teachers can create environments where students not only learn but also grow in self-confidence and bravery with the help of guidance counselors and school leaders.

*On Ways in Coping with Struggles in School.* When students had trouble with schoolwork, many of them went online, asked friends for help, or did their own research to keep up. This shows how important it is for students to have access to digital tools and be good at finding and using information in today's classrooms. Schools should buy stable internet connections, updated learning platforms, and easy-to-use digital tools to really help students. Teachers and librarians should also teach students how to use these tools in a smart and responsible way. This kind of help can make learning more fair, giving every student the chance to grow with confidence and independence. School heads and local education officials can help with this.

*On Action Done to Help Overcome Difficulties in Learning Lesson.* Many students were able to get through tough times in school by asking questions, studying ahead of time, and using self-study methods. Their work shows how important it is to have good study habits and be self-disciplined. Schools should teach students how to manage their time, take notes, and learn on their own as part of the regular curriculum to help more of them do well. Teachers can lead workshops and classroom activities that help students learn these skills in a useful and positive way, with the help of guidance counselors and academic

coordinators. When students learn how to manage their learning early on, they become more confident, focused, and ready for anything that comes their way.

*On Things Done to Keep Oneself Engage in School Activities.* Some students stayed motivated by talking to each other in groups, watching helpful videos, and staying in touch with their friends. Their experiences demonstrate that learning extends beyond the classroom; it can be social, interactive, and even digital. Schools should make more places for extracurricular activities, study groups led by peers, and clubs based on interests to keep students interested. Teachers, with help from school administrators and student leaders, can help plan these events and get students to join in. Students are more likely to stay curious, involved, and inspired when they feel like what they are learning is connected to real friendships and things they like to do.

*On Factors that Help Students in Sustaining their Studies Despite Taking an Alternative Strand.* Students said they were able to keep going because their teachers, friends, and family were there for them. Their stories show us that every successful student has a strong support system that listens to them, encourages them, and believes in them. To create this kind of environment, schools should make peer mentoring programs stronger, make counseling services easier to get to, and encourage teachers to check in on students' well-being on a regular basis. A caring and connected school community can be built with the help of school leaders, guidance counselors, and teachers. This way, no student will feel alone on their journey.

*On Ways Students May Do in Order to Keep Their Interest in Their Studies.* Students said that staying disciplined, managing their time well, and setting personal goals helped them stay focused in school. It took time and practice to learn and get used to these habits. This shows how important it is to include setting goals and working on yourself in the learning process. Schools should include life skills lessons in the curriculum so that students can learn how to plan, reflect, and build mental toughness. These lessons can help students get ready for more than just schoolwork. With the help of teachers, guidance counselors, and values education coordinators, they can get ready for life outside of school.

*On Learnings Wanted to Share to Others Facing the Same Challenges.* A lot of students talked about how important it was to stay focused, come up with new ideas, and keep their motivation high even when things got hard. Their experiences demonstrate that students are not merely recipients of knowledge; they are also problem solvers, critical thinkers, and leaders in their own right. To honor this, schools should give students places to share their stories, help each other, and be peer mentors. Teachers, along with the heads of schools and coordinators of student affairs, can set up places like student panels, storytelling sessions, or leadership programs where students can lift each other up by speaking out. When students feel like they are being heard and given power, they can be a source of strength for their peers.

## Implications for Future Research

This work especially motivates future studies on the consequences of strand misalignment on students' academic performance, emotional health, and long-term career paths. Future studies could look at how different strands affect college success, particularly for students who were compelled to choose one depending on lack of options rather than personal inclination. Additionally helpful would be more research on the long-term consequences of this mismatch on self-esteem and drive.

Analyzing the purpose of guidance counseling in strand choosing would also be helpful. Future research could investigate whether or not school-based guidance programs really help students make wise decisions as well as their efficiency. Studies on the value of treatments including career seminars, personality tests, or mentoring programs could especially be focused on institutions with few academic choices.

Lastly, future research should consider the experiences of students in low-income or rural areas with inadequate resources for their education. These students regularly deal with problems outside of their course of study, including limited budgets or poor internet access. By knowing their specific difficulties and coping strategies, teachers and legislators can design better support systems to enable students to flourish regardless of their strand of study.

## Concluding Remarks

This study clarifies the real and personal experiences of students—especially those with strong mathematical enthusiasm—who were assigned to strands incompatible with their aptitudes or interests. Many had to cope with problems including lack of prior knowledge, difficulty grasping lessons, peer, parent, or teacher pressure. Using online resources, self-study, peer and teacher support, students were able to overcome these challenges. Though their initial road was not what they had in mind, their stories show tenacity and a great will to achieve.

What most strikes is the students' ability for adaptation. Some found value in their strand, learnt to accept their situation, and stayed motivated by thinking ahead or setting personal goals. Others persisted depending on their support systems or emphasizing small successes. Their observations remind us that, even if plans might not always go as intended, tenacity and support can be rather powerful.

In the end, this research reminds educators, parents, and institutions that every student travels a different path. When we pay attention to their voices and understand their difficulties, we can enhance learning settings that support not only academic success but also personal development and well-being.

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