Academic Validation: Is it Necessary or Not?

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Abstract: This qualitative study aimed to explore the lived experiences of Grade 12 achievers at Aplaya National High School (ANHS) regarding academic validation. The study utilized a phenomenological approach to understand the perspectives and perceptions of the participants. Non-probability purposive sampling was employed to select honor students from different strands. Data was collected through interviews, and thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The findings revealed five superordinate themes: "Personal Experiences Caused by Academic Validation," "Positive Effects of Academic Validation," "Negative Effects of Academic Validation," "Challenges on Academic Validation," and "Strategies in Handling Academic Validation." Achievers perceived academic validation as a source of recognition, motivation, and self-esteem. However, it could also lead to stress and negative consequences, such as sleep deprivation and anxiety. The findings emphasized the importance of individual responses to academic validation and highlighted the need for a balanced approach. Based on the findings, a program was proposed to improve academic validation among Grade 12 achievers, which involved highlighting their achievements through a bulletin board to foster a sense of appreciation and motivation. The conclusions drawn from the study contribute to understanding the experiences of achievers and provide recommendations for educators and students to promote a healthier approach to academic validation.

Keywords: lived experiences; achievers; academic validation; perception; recognition

1. INTRODUCTION

Estabillo (2022) defined academic validation as a situation when a student relies on their academics to feel recognized as an individual. Most students rely on their studies to feel validated, and academic recognition can be a motivator for them to do well in their studies; it can result in good grades, opportunities, and thankful parents. However, according to Gurung and Bouchrika (2023), over 75% of high school students report feeling stressed by academic work, many of them exhausted by the need for academic validation, a psychological pressure that stems from students "giving grades a lot of power over their sense of success." Academic validation can start at any age, but as time passes, the intensity increases. The researchers conducted this study to help future researchers gain a better understanding of academic validation,

which is an important aspect of being a student. The goal of this study is to determine the effect of academic validation on Grade 12 students. This study will give students the feeling that their efforts are being noticed and valued. Once the study is completed, the researchers hope to make new changes in how students deal with the feeling of academic validation. They are currently working on it to complete the beneficial study. The study's benefits include being a tool for researchers and assisting future researchers in conducting research, as well as benefiting the school. The researchers wanted to conduct a study on this topic to help students feel that their efforts are being seen and that their feelings are valid. The emphasis of this evaluation is that achievers must be honor students beginning in their first semester of the 12th Grade. The reason the researchers conducted this study is to guide future researchers to have a deeper understanding of academic

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validation as it is a big part of being a student.

2. METHODOLOGY
2.1. Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored to the Validation Theory of Rendon (1994, as cited by Mbaegbu, 2019). Rendon defines validation as the process of recognizing and validating a student's abilities, life experiences, and cultural heritages. It entails establishing a welcoming environment where students' identities, viewpoints, and contributions are valued. The validity of students' entire selves, including their cultural, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual components, is stressed by this idea. According to the validation theory, students are more likely to build a good self-identity, improve their academic performance, and continue their education if they feel validated. It also acknowledges the value of establishing a sense of community and connection among educators. Rendon claimed that academic affirmation enhances and eases a student's will. That many students have academic aspirations and work hard to get good grades is an adage that many of them have heard, and it can have a significant effect on their life. They did not understand the emotional connection that they had based on academic accomplishment until they started high school. Create a sense of community and choose instructors who will emphasize students' talents and convey knowledge so that students can draw from their past, recognize themselves in the classes, interact with others, and grow connections with educators and students with similar experiences to their own. Another illustration is how teachers could support the idea that what children learn matters. Equally important is respecting the expertise and viewpoints people bring to the classroom. If educators want students to see themselves, they must put more thought into the curriculum and the data they read and discover. This theory is pertinent to the study since it offers reliable data on academic validation that is like what researchers concluded in their findings.

2.2. Research Design

This study aimed to determine the lived experiences of Grade 12 achievers in ANHS. Furthermore, the purpose of this study is to learn the perspectives of the achievers on academic validation. The researchers used a qualitative research design, which involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research (Bhandari, 2020). Meanwhile, the phenomenological approach involves investigating phenomena through people's lived experiences. To measure the lived experiences of Grade 12 achievers at Aplaya National High School. The researchers also used phenomenological research, it is a qualitative method that aims to comprehend and characterize the universal essence of a phenomenon.

2.3. Sampling and Population

The researchers used non-probability sampling, which involves non-random selection based on convenience or other criteria, allowing you to easily collect data (McCombes, 2022). The researchers selected achievers from the Grade 12 level at Aplaya National High School. Because they wanted to know the perception and lived experiences of the achievers, they used the purposive sampling method. This technique is frequently used in qualitative research, where the researcher seeks detailed information about a specific phenomenon rather than statistical inferences. Because they aim to select volunteers who will be most valuable to the researchers and useful for their study. The researchers will select students from the different strands of grade 12: Accountancy, Business, and Management Strand (ABM), Humanities and Social Sciences Strand (HUMSS), Information and Communication Technology Strand (ICT), General Academic Strand (GAS), Cookery, and Tailoring. Each participant chosen by the researchers must have been a Grade 12 honor student from the first semester, regardless of gender or age.

2.4. Data Gathering Procedure

The permission letter was first secured before the conduct of the interview. To assure that participants' information will be taken confidentially, a consent form was given to them. During the interview, the researchers asked permission to voice record the responses given by the participants. After collecting the verbal responses, the researchers encoded the word-per-word responses through the verbatim transcription. Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data. It is usually applied to a set of texts, such as an interview or transcripts. The researcher closely examines the data to identify common themes – topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly, the researchers will use a semantic approach, a semantic approach involves analyzing the explicit content of the data (Caulfield, 2022). The researchers also ensured that the information

provided by the participants is stored in a secure location. When the information is no longer required, they shredded the paper into small bits and produced a new sheet of paper.

2.5. Data Analysis

The data obtained from the participants were analyzed using thematic analysis. In qualitative research, one of the most common approaches of analysis is called thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data. It is usually applied to a set of texts, such as an interview or transcripts. The step-by-step process of thematic analysis involves gaining familiarity with the data, creating codes, developing themes, evaluating potential themes, naming, and defining themes, and producing the report. The researcher closely examines the data to identify common themes – topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly (Caulfield, 2022). The researchers used a semantic approach, a semantic approach involves analyzing the explicit content of the data (Caulfield, 2022).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides the study's findings and conclusions. analysis of the data gathered. The researchers evaluated the data after transcribing the interviews of the selected individuals and discovered four significant themes:

a) Personal experiences caused by academic validation.

Since the study aimed to explore the lived experiences of Grade 12 achievers at Aplaya National High School (ANHS) regarding academic validation. One of the major themes that emerged was their personal experience of academic validation. One participant, student D, said, *"It made me feel amazing about myself and push myself to do better and improve my academic performance when I lack something. "*

Another participant, student E, shared, *''When I am praised, of course, I am happy, because I feel that all of my hard work paid off, like my sacrifices: sleepless nights, an empty stomach once in a while.''*

Responses of achievers when asked how they feel when they are congratulated on their achievements.

Participant B, shared, *''Of course, happiness, because the validation we received from other people serves as my motivation to achieve more, because it is a wonderful feeling when people see your achievements.''*

Based on the responses of achievers when questioned about their experiences with academic validation, it produced great emotions and inspired them to do better in school.

The study of Estabillo (2022) can be used to support these assertions. They claimed that seeking academic validation can help students feel better about themselves because it shows that their efforts are being noticed, boosts their confidence, and gives them peace of mind that everything is going well. In addition to motivating students to work harder, achieve more, and be the best versions of themselves possible, the pursuit of academic validations also enables them to gain positive experiences that will be beneficial to them in the future. Students who receive academic validation gain the self-assurance and sense of worth they seek in life. Many students claim that relying on their grades for affirmation motivates them to stay up all night studying or working on assignments to ensure they do well.

b) Effects of academic validation

The responses from achievers to questions about how they feel when their accomplishments are not acknowledged. It is only natural for people to hope for some sort of acknowledgement or praise when they work incredibly hard to accomplish a goal. But when they don't get the response, they were hoping for, it can cause a wide range of feelings. Some responses show that they try to not let it affect them, such as when they stated that they do not require other people's praise, Participant C said- *''...there are many people who really seek validation from other people, but it doesn't work for me. So maybe others expect that they may feel disappointed when they don't receive validation from other people; maybe they are sad. But for me, when I asked myself when answering this one, for me it is okay, because, in my perception, I don't do things for other people; I do it for myself. I don't feel any negativity or disappointment, because if I feel satisfied with myself, I don't care.''*

while others show sadness because they believe their efforts have been in vain. Participant I said- *''I'm sad, and I feel like they don't recognize my hard work.''* A few people said they don't mind if other people don't congratulate them.

In general, based on the replies of achievers when asked about their achievements not being recognized, it causes undesirable unpredictable emotions.

These statements can be supported by Usher (2022). Academic validation is a term used to describe the pressure students place on themselves to get good grades and the belief that they are less deserving of praise if they do not achieve nearly perfect grades. According to a voluntary survey of 45 LSE students, 80 percent of students regularly deal with academic validation pressures. The feeling of not knowing if others are struggling creates a comparison between students and their classmates, leading students to believe they are not good enough or are not achieving high enough grades. Inability to meet these high academic standards can cause a slump in a student's life, leading to an exhausting cycle of overworking and then feeling burned out.

c) Challenges on academic validation

The varied answers of the achievers on what challenges they had encountered before receiving academic validation. A few of them said that time management is their No. 1 struggle, like they can't seem to find the time to juggle their tasks when sometimes there is too many to do. Participant I said, *"The main challenge for me is time management. Because sometimes there is a lack of time, I can't manage my tasks that well because there are other things that need my attention than my activities in school."*

They also mentioned a lack of sleep, saying that they stay up until midnight or will wake up super early to finish their tasks on time. The achievers also mentioned that they experienced stress, anxiety, comparing themselves to others, pressure, and procrastination. Some even said that sometimes they feel disappointed in themselves. Participant J also mentioned- *''Most of the time, I feel stressed, then I over think,*

and sometimes I suffer from lack of sleep because I need to pass my tasks on time so there will be no deduction of points.''

In all, the responses of achievers when questioned about the challenges they faced while gaining academic validation are time management, lack of sleep, unhealthy eating habits, long wakefulness, and so on.

According to The Mental Health Toll of Academic Pressure by the Newport Institute (2022), students may experience academic stress because of their families' expectations, lofty goals they have set for themselves, or the demands that society as a whole places on them. Coaches and administrators may also encourage students to do well in school. Academic pressure, regardless of its source, can have a negative impact on a variety of aspects of one's well-being. When young adults believe that academic achievement should take precedence over everything else, including physical health, positive relationships with peers and family, opportunities for creative self-expression, and downtime to recharge their batteries, it has a negative impact on their mental health.

d) Strategies in handling academic validation

Responses from achievers on what advice they would offer to those lacking academic validation based on their personal experiences. The achievers mentioned that it is okay to not receive academic validation and that they should trust themselves. They should not need to seek academic validation from others; they should just focus on themselves; they should strive for more, do hard work, and believe in themselves. Participant E said- *''it's okay if you are not receiving any validation. Just keep on striving and always do your best until your time comes. Clap for others until they are the ones coming up to you. Just do your best; even if they do not see it, you know in yourself that you did your best and gave everything.''*

They also said that no one should depend on another opinion for their own worth. And they also said that you shouldn't let anyone drag you down and trust yourself and what you can do. Participant H said- *''Just trust in what you can do;*

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don't let anyone drag you down; and always remember that trying your best is enough.''

Overall, based on the achievers' responses when asked what advice they would provide to someone who does not receive academic validation, the participants stated that we should not rely on others' opinions and should simply do our best.

These claims can be backed by the study of Kloza et al. (2021), who stated that getting a bad grade is natural cause to be dissatisfied or concerned, but the problem arises when you allow it to control who you are. The desire to uphold or harm a particular reputation is also important in academic validation. Those who have previously achieved success want to be seen as "exceeding," whereas those who have previously faced challenges want to overcome them. When that moment arrives, it is a signal to break that habit gradually. One of the most effective ways to avoid the need for academic affirmation is to break the reputation-dependent mindset. They must constantly remind themselves that the opinions of others should not influence their decisions.

Table 3.1. Summary of Superordinate and Subordinate Themes on Lived Experiences of Grade 12 Achievers in Academic Validation

Interview Questions	Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes
1. Have you experienced being praised by your family, friends, teachers due to your academic performance?	Personal Experiences Caused by Academic Validation	• Brings Unpleasant Emotions • Possess Positive Feelings • Serves as a Motivator • Being Reliant on the Judgement of others
2.1. Have you ever received academic validation from others? 2.2. How do you describe your experience when you receive academic validation?	Challenges on Academic Validation	• Time Management • Procrastination • Laziness • Mental Health Problems
3.1. What makes you feel whenever you are congratulated? 3.2. How do you describe your feelings? 3.3. How do you describe your feeling whenever you don't receive praise for your academic achievement?	Negative Effects of Academic Validation	• Lack of Sleep • Doubting One's Worth • Erratic Emotions
4. What are the challenges you have	Positive Effects of Academic	• Motivated Students • Feels

encountered as a student before you receive validation?	Validation	Appreciated and Validated • Boosts their Self-Esteem
5. Why do you think there is a need to seek academic validation from other people?	Strategies in Handling Academic Validation	• Believe in Oneself • Work Smart in Academics • Acceptance of Feedbacks • Health Breaks

Table 3.2. Proposed Program on Improving the Academic Validation among Students

Key Results Area/Area of Concern	Objectives	Strategies/ Activities
Experiences of Achievers with Academic Validation	To help students feel that their efforts in their academic performance are seen and that their feelings are valid.	**Day 1:** Ask permission from the school board. Determine the students who excelled in various academic disciplines both curricular and extracurricular aspects. **Day 2:** Design the bulletin board of achievers to be placed where people are usually passing by (most probably on the first floor of school corridors). **Day 3:** Conduct Academic Deliberations in choosing the appropriate set of students to be put on the bulletin board. **Day 4:** Highlight the recognition given to the achievers through Bulletin Board of Achievers including the Academic Excellence Awardees, Outstanding Students in Various Academic Disciplines, Perfect Attendance Awardees, and Most Improved Students of the Quarter and Semester.

The researchers created a planned activity called "Academic Achievers' Spotlight: Celebrating Excellence" to help the achievers feel like their efforts and academic performance are being recognized by the school to encourage

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students to study and help them do their studies more effectively. The completion of the said project would require four days and 1 to 3 hours a day for the researchers to get permission, buy materials, and make the bulletin board. The researchers will ask for help from the school board and the achievers. After the completion of the project, it will make the achievers feel appreciated and encourage other students to study harder.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions have been derived from the study's findings: (1) Achievers receive a sense of personal recognition, a sense that their efforts are acknowledged, and a sense of drive to perform well in school. (2) Academic validation offers advantages, but it also has disadvantages. (3) It is determined by how pupils manage academic validation. (4) The proposed program will motivate achievers to perform better since they will see that their efforts are recognized.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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