



TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS IN MAINTAINING ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP: A MULTIPLE-CASE STUDY

Desiree S. Maloloy-On¹ⁱ,

Jocelyn S. Jimenez²,

Mark Paul D. Nitafan³

¹Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges,
General Santos City,
Philippines

²EdD,
Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges,
General Santos City,
Philippines

³LPT,
Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges,
General Santos City,
Philippines

Abstract:

This qualitative multiple case study explored the trials and triumphs of college students in maintaining academic scholarships at Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges in General Santos City. The study aimed to understand the lived experiences of scholars as they balanced academic demands, personal responsibilities, and financial limitations. Three third-year academic scholars from different colleges, Arts and Sciences, Teacher Education, and Engineering and Technology participated in the study. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analyzed to identify key themes. Findings revealed nine emergent themes: balancing pressure and perseverance, juggling duties and expectations, sustaining success through strategies, building habits for success, time management and support, growth beyond academics, and lessons in lifelong discipline. These scholars shared how they developed coping strategies such as goal-setting, time management, peer support, and self-reflection to overcome pressures and maintain strong academic performance. The results emphasized the value of emotional resilience, mentor guidance, and support systems in sustaining academic achievement. This study contributes to the understanding of student experiences and offers insights for institutions and scholarship providers in creating holistic support mechanisms. Ultimately, it highlights that perseverance, discipline, and personal growth play a vital role in achieving academic success.

ⁱ Correspondence: email desireemaloloyon12@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

This study is grounded in the lived experiences of academic scholars who strive to maintain their scholarships while balancing academic demands, financial constraints, and personal responsibilities. Academic scholarships serve as both a privilege and a lifeline, particularly for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, yet they also carry high expectations that often result in emotional strain, anxiety, and fear of failure. While scholarships are intended to promote academic excellence, they frequently create pressure that compromises students' mental and emotional well-being, revealing a tension between performance-based requirements and holistic development.

Globally and internationally, research has highlighted academic stress as a growing concern that affects motivation, resilience, and overall psychological health. In the Philippine context, rigid scholarship standards have been recognized as limiting students' opportunities for balanced growth, while locally, scholars in General Santos City often juggle academics with part-time work and family obligations, making scholarship retention crucial to their educational survival. Despite public recognition of academic success, the silent struggles of scholars remain largely unspoken.

As an academic scholar, the researcher personally experienced the weight of expectations and the emotional toll of maintaining scholarship requirements, reinforcing the need to explore these realities. However, existing literature tends to focus on academic outcomes rather than the emotional and psychological dimensions of scholarship maintenance. This gap underscores the need for a qualitative, multiple-case study that captures scholars' voices, examines their trials and triumphs, and provides insights that can inform more compassionate, supportive, and student-centered scholarship policies and institutional practices.

2. Literature Review

This review of related literature presents significant scholarly works that informed and supported the present study by examining academic scholarship, academic stress, motivation, mental health, coping mechanisms, and resilience among college students. Existing literature from scholarly articles, institutional reports, and empirical studies highlights that academic scholarships, while designed to promote educational access and excellence, often impose intense performance-based expectations that contribute to stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion among recipients.

Several studies emphasize that academic pressure negatively affects students' motivation, self-esteem, and psychological well-being, particularly when scholarship retention is tied to rigid grading standards. Research further indicates that financial stress exacerbates academic burden, forcing scholars to balance academic responsibilities with

part-time work and family obligations. Literature on coping mechanisms and resilience reveals that students employ strategies such as time management, social support, faith, and self-motivation to withstand academic challenges, yet these strategies are not always sufficient without institutional support.

Moreover, previous studies largely focus on quantitative academic outcomes such as grades and retention rates, leaving the emotional and lived experiences of scholars underexplored. This gap is evident in the limited number of qualitative studies that give voice to students' personal narratives of struggle and perseverance. Collectively, the reviewed literature provides a foundational understanding of the pressures faced by academic scholars while also revealing the need for in-depth, experience-based research. These insights justify the present qualitative multiple-case study, which seeks to critically examine the trials and triumphs of maintaining academic scholarship and contribute to more holistic, compassionate, and student-centered scholarship policies.

3. Material and Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design using a multiple-case study approach to explore the trials and triumphs of maintaining academic scholarship among Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) students. The participants of the study consisted of selected academic scholars from Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges of General Santos City who met the inclusion criteria of being current or former scholarship recipients. The participants were chosen through purposive sampling to ensure that they had direct and relevant experiences related to scholarship maintenance. The study participants varied in age and included both male and female students, allowing a comprehensive understanding of diverse scholar experiences.

Data were gathered using a validated semi-structured interview guide as the primary research instrument, which enabled the participants to freely express their lived experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights while maintaining academic scholarship. The interviews were conducted in a manner that ensured confidentiality, voluntary participation, and ethical compliance, with informed consent obtained prior to data collection. Interviews were audio-recorded with permission and later transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy of the data. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving familiarization with the data, coding, categorization, and identification of emerging themes across cases.

This analytical process allowed for the comparison of similarities and differences among participants' experiences. Since the study is qualitative in nature, statistical methods and numerical measurements were not employed; instead, trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability measures. Abbreviated terms used in the study, such as RRL (Review of Related Literature) and BEED (Bachelor of Elementary Education), were clearly defined to ensure clarity and understanding. Overall, the detailed methodological procedures enable transparency

and provide sufficient basis for understanding, analyzing, and comparing the findings of the study.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of the study reveal that maintaining an academic scholarship is a complex experience marked by both significant challenges and meaningful personal growth among BEED academic scholars. The most prominent findings indicate that participants commonly experienced intense academic pressure, fear of losing their scholarship, emotional exhaustion, and financial stress, particularly due to the need to balance academic responsibilities with family obligations and, in some cases, part-time work. These findings directly address the study's objectives of exploring the trials encountered by scholars and are consistent with previous studies that associate scholarship retention with heightened academic stress and mental health concerns.

Despite these challenges, the participants demonstrated strong coping mechanisms such as self-discipline, time management, reliance on family and peer support, faith, and intrinsic motivation, which enabled them to persist academically. These triumphs highlight resilience as a central theme, reinforcing earlier research that identifies perseverance and social support as key factors in academic success under pressure. Comparatively, while existing literature often emphasizes quantitative outcomes such as grades and retention rates, the present study contributes new insights by foregrounding the emotional and lived experiences of scholars.

The results further show that scholars' struggles are frequently hidden behind academic recognition, echoing contemporary discussions on the need for more compassionate and holistic scholarship systems. The findings are relevant to current educational practice, as they underscore the importance of institutional support mechanisms that address not only academic performance but also students' psychological well-being. Overall, the results affirm the premise of the study and extend existing literature by providing an in-depth, qualitative understanding of the realities faced by academic scholars, offering implications for policy improvement and student-centered scholarship programs.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, several theoretical and practical recommendations are proposed to enhance scholarship programs and student support systems. Theoretically, future research may further examine the lived experiences of academic scholars using longitudinal or phenomenological approaches to capture changes in coping mechanisms and resilience over time, as well as explore comparative studies involving scholars from different academic programs or institutions.

Practically, higher education institutions are encouraged to implement more holistic scholarship policies that balance academic excellence with students' mental and

emotional well-being, such as flexible grading thresholds, counseling services, and regular wellness monitoring for scholars. Scholarship administrators and policymakers may also consider integrating mentorship programs and academic advising tailored to scholars who face financial and familial responsibilities. Educators are recommended to adopt supportive classroom practices that recognize students' diverse circumstances and reduce unnecessary academic pressure.

Additionally, the findings suggest the need for open dialogues about the emotional challenges associated with scholarship maintenance to reduce stigma and promote help-seeking behavior. From a social and cultural perspective, there is a need to reframe societal perceptions of academic scholars by acknowledging not only their achievements but also their struggles, thereby fostering a more compassionate and inclusive academic culture. These recommendations aim to inform future research, guide institutional practices, and contribute to the development of more humane and student-centered scholarship systems.

6. Conclusion

This study concludes that maintaining an academic scholarship among BEED students is a demanding yet transformative experience characterized by both trials and triumphs. The findings revealed that academic scholars face significant challenges, including intense academic pressure, fear of losing scholarship privileges, financial strain, and emotional exhaustion. Despite these difficulties, the participants demonstrated resilience, perseverance, and effective coping mechanisms such as self-discipline, time management, reliance on social and family support, faith, and intrinsic motivation. The study further concludes that while academic success is often publicly recognized, the emotional and psychological struggles of scholars remain largely unseen. These conclusions affirm that scholarship maintenance extends beyond academic performance and involves holistic personal endurance and growth. By giving voice to scholars' lived experiences, the study highlights the need to view academic achievement not only through grades but also through the realities of students' well-being and resilience.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Desiree Santiago Maloloy-on is a Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) student at Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges of General Santos City and an academic scholar. She has consistently demonstrated academic excellence as a Dean's Lister, honor student, and student leader while overcoming financial challenges throughout her educational journey. Her academic and research interests include educational psychology, student motivation, academic stress, resilience, and the lived experiences of scholarship recipients in higher education. She is particularly inclined toward qualitative research approaches that foreground the voices of marginalized and underrepresented student populations. Through her research engagement and involvement in academic and institutional activities, she aspires to contribute meaningful insights that support inclusive, compassionate, and student-centered educational policies and practices.

Jocelyn Jimenez is a co-author of this study and an educator with experience in academic instruction, research mentoring, and student development. Her scholarly interests include educational research, learner support systems, and inclusive teaching practices. She contributed significantly to the conceptualization of the study, the refinement of the research framework, and the critical review of the manuscript. Her guidance

strengthened the theoretical grounding and methodological coherence of the research, ensuring its alignment with ethical and academic standards.

Paul Nitafan is a co-author of this research and has been actively involved in academic supervision, research validation, and scholarly writing. His professional interests focus on educational assessment, research methodology, and the improvement of teaching and learning practices in higher education. He provided substantial input in the development of the study design, data interpretation, and overall manuscript refinement. His contributions helped ensure the clarity, rigor, and relevance of the research, particularly in addressing issues related to student well-being and academic scholarship.

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