

# Strengths and Struggles among High Academic Achievers in Senior High School: A Philippine Setting

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this qualitative research project is to investigate the strengths and weaknesses among high academic achievers faced in their senior high school years. In-depth interviews are used in the study to collect rich, nuanced material, which is then thematically evaluated to find major themes. Expectation and Pressure from Others, Losing Interest, "Procrastination and Cramming", Distractions, and Family Pressure are the five issues that the research focuses on.*

*The results show that high academic achievers experience tremendous external pressure from peers, teachers, and parents, which can cause stress and anxiety. Academic burnout is evident since some individuals also express a progressive loss of enthusiasm and love for their study. When used to handle workload and pressure, unhealthy coping techniques like procrastination and cramming have a negative effect on learning outcomes. Academic performance is further hampered by personal interests and technological distractions. Additionally, family pressure has a significant impact on how students experience school, highlighting the need of setting reasonable expectations and maintaining open lines of communication.*

*The study comes to the conclusion that high achievers in senior high school require specialized assistance and interventions. It's crucial to establish a welcoming workplace that values individual goals, encourages intrinsic drive, and supports a good work-life balance. Time management abilities, study habits, and stress management strategies should all be covered in interventions. Concentration and productivity can be improved by reducing distractions and encouraging focused study time. To combat family pressure and create a healthier family dynamic, it is essential that parents, students, and educators have open communication with one another.*

*Hence, this study adds to our understanding of the difficulties high academic achievers in senior high school confront and offers insightful information for legislators, parents, and teachers. Stakeholders may establish an atmosphere that supports the well-being, engagement, and academic success of high achievers by recognizing and resolving these problems, eventually supporting their holistic development and future successes.*

**Keywords:** High Academic Achievers

## I. INTRODUCTION

Academic achievement measures the extent to which a person has completed goals set in an instructional environment, specifically in school, college, and university (Steinmayr, 2014). High achieving students are students who perform very well in their studies and better academically than their peers (Fisher, 2014). Students face academic challenges (e.g. understanding the lecture, studying overnight, etc.) and non-academic challenges (e.g. burn-out, stress, etc.) in school (Foong, 2020). Failure to cope with these challenges can lead to burn-out and stress that could result to poor performance, poor sleep, dropout and substance abuse. (Pascoe, 2020). All students' face challenges but some students has strategies on how to cope with these challenges and become high academic achievers (Foong, 2020). This study aims to acknowledge the challenges experienced by high academic achievers in senior high school.

The studies that have been reviewed shows that challenges and different factors have a significant effect on the students' academic achievement. It should take to consideration how students use these factors to their advantage in

dealing with the challenges they face. This qualitative research study aims to explore the challenges experienced by high academic achievers in senior high school.

The study intends to explore the challenges among high academic achievers faced. The study is limited to 5 respondent who are high academic achievers of Senior High School. The locale of the study is limited to Surigao del Norte State University Del Carmen Campus and would be an ideal coverage to investigate what challenges do high academic achievers face.

High academic achievers and low academic achievers both face challenges, but high academic achievers manage the challenges better. Institutions and its students may be able to obtain guidance in dealing with challenges they face academically and non-academically thanks to this acknowledgement of the challenges and struggles of high academic achievers. The findings of this study will serve as a foundation for developing targeted strategies to address these challenges and create a supportive environment that fosters the holistic development of high achievers.

### 1.1 Objectives of the Study

This research aims to explore how high academic achievers deal with challenges they face and the factors which resulted in their academic achievement.

Specifically it aims to answer the following questions:

- What are the main challenges faced by high academic achievers in the Senior High School program?
- How do emotional factors, such as stress and pressure, impact the academic performance of high achievers in Senior High School?
- What strategies can be implemented to support high academic achievers in balancing academic demands and maintaining healthy social relationships in the Senior High School program?

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter includes past articles or researches, ideas, conclusions, methodology and others. Those included in this chapter will help us to familiarise the information that are similar and relevant to the present study.

In the work and research of Eakman, Kinney, Schierl, and Henry (2019) academic achievement was also included. He mentioned that post-traumatic stress, learning environment support, depression, self-efficacy, and academic problems are positively associated with learning environments which helps promote self-efficacy, reduce academic problems, and autonomy, among others. Associated with comprehensive research results showing impact linked to achievement. Moreover, these factors persisted regardless of levels of depression or post-traumatic stress. In another study of Moffateh (2020) he also mentioned that rates of depression are much higher among university students, and in most developed countries about one-third of all students have some degree of sad, anxiety, and depression (SAD) disorder, which those students with low self-esteem and self-confidence, pre-college mental illness, personality type (highly neurotic and low extravasation), and loneliness may be more likely to develop SAD in college. High-performing students tend to be polite, well-organised, and have good time management skills. They adapt well to the classroom environment and are enthusiastic participants in classroom discussions. They get good grades and do what they have to do to improve their academic performance. In the study of Jnanashakti Campus, Torvi, and Vijayapur (2017) high academic achievers require high performance, have high ego ideals, are confident, competitive, hardworking, and seek and maintain self-esteem in order to achieve high status.

**Academic Pressure and Stress:** High academic achievers often experience intense pressure to maintain their exceptional performance, leading to increased stress levels. According to Smith and Johnson's (2018) research, this pressure can be attributed to a variety of factors, including parental expectations, peer competition, and the fear of failing. Their physical and mental health may suffer as a result of the continual pressure to perform well and satisfy high standards.

**Social Isolation:** The pursuit of academic excellence may lead to social isolation for high academic achievers. According to Maldonado and Garcia (2019), it could be difficult for these students to strike a balance between their social obligations and academic responsibilities. To concentrate on their academics, they frequently forego social gatherings, extracurricular activities, and free time, which results in a lack of social relationships and feelings of loneliness.

**Mental Health Concerns:** High academic achievers are subjected to high expectations, which may cause anxiety and perfectionism. According to a study by Lee et al. (2017), these students' unrelenting pursuit of academic excellence makes them more likely to exhibit signs of anxiety and depressive disorders. Their mental health may suffer as a result of the stress of balancing various duties with the pressure to perform academically.

**Lack of Work-Life Balance:** Achieving high academic success requires significant time and effort, often leading to a lack of work-life balance for high academic achievers. These students commonly report sleep deprivation, decreased physical activity, and less free time for leisure activities, according to Huang and Chen (2020). Their general well-being may suffer if they don't lead a balanced lifestyle, which can also impede their ability to grow personally outside of the classroom.

## 2.1 Method

This chapter discussed the research design, participants of the study, its sampling techniques, research instrument and its validation. The data gathering procedure, and processing method that is used in the study also discussed in this chapter. This type of research study is a qualitative approach using interviews, observations and documentation. A qualitative research is a type of study whose purpose is to gather important information from Senior High School students who were High Academic Achievers in Surigao del Norte State University – Del Carmen Campus. The common techniques used in qualitative research studies are through observation, comprehension, concentration, participant availability, forming groups, inviting participants to interviews, taking notes, and recording audio to interpret the data collected.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Theme 1: Expectation and Pressure from Others

Participants discussed the substantial pressures and expectations they experience from numerous sources. They express the need to continuously deliver excellent work, adhere to the expectations of their teachers, and please their family (Kelly, 2018). Their challenges are exacerbated by the pressure to maintain good grades, get high honors, and live up to others' high expectations. According to Eccles and Wang (2016), this pressure frequently resulted in emotions of tension, worry, and a fear of disappointing those who held high expectations for their achievement.

### Theme 2: Loss of Interest

Participants talked about how being under so much pressure and failing to live up to expectations causes them to lose interest. In response to the ongoing academic pressures, they exhibit emotions of tiredness, burnout, and parental misunderstanding (Suni et al., 2019). The participants want to be understood and appreciated, and they want to know that it's acceptable if they don't get honors. Their enthusiasm and interest in school and life are further diminished by the ongoing pressure and disappointment from their parents when they don't receive the expected grades.

### Theme 3: Procrastination and Cramming

Participants admitted using procrastination and cramming as coping strategies to handle the intense pressure and workload (Milgram & Rosenbaum, 2020). High achievers in the classroom made note of their procrastination habits and the practice of delaying things until the very last minute. They speak about the difficulties in time management that lead to cramming and studying late at night. They admit that cramming increases brain activity, but they also recognise the stress and adverse effects that come with it.

### Theme 4: Distractions

High academic achievers frequently faced interruptions that disrupted their concentration and study schedule (Bürkner, 2017). Participants talked on how distractions affected their academic difficulties. They discuss how the appeal of social media and cellphones encourages procrastination and poor time management. They acknowledge the drawbacks of excessive phone use, such as lost study time and information that they might otherwise forget.

### **Theme 5: Family Pressure**

Participants described feeling intense family pressure to maintain their good academic achievement (Bui et al., 2019). They emphasized the important role that familial pressure played in their battles. They talk about the persistent pressure to perform above expectations, the disappointment their families have in their academic performance, and the ongoing comparisons with other students. The participants believe that their efforts are underappreciated and that rather than appreciating their hard work, their families constantly look for what is lacking. When they don't obtain the grades they want, their parents get angry and pressurize them, sometimes going so far as to make derogatory comments.

Overall, the thematic analysis demonstrates the many problems that senior high school academically gifted students endure. Their difficulties are exacerbated by the weight of others' expectations and pressure, a loss of interest, procrastination and cramming habits, distractions, and family pressure. In order to support the well-being and academic achievement of high achievers, the analysis underlines the need for understanding, empathy, and realistic expectations from both families and educational institutions.

The results of this qualitative study interview offer important new perspectives on the difficulties high academic achievers encounter in their senior high school years. Five major themes emerged from the thematic analysis: family pressure, procrastination and cramming, distractions, losing interest, and expectations and pressure from others. These themes highlighted the need for specialized assistance and interventions by shedding focus on the distinctive experiences and challenges faced by high achievers.

The expectation and pressure from others was a key element that arose from the interviews. High academic achievers have described feeling too pressured to uphold their high grades and academic excellence in the face of expectations from parents, instructors, and classmates. This result is consistent with earlier research that showed how external pressure affects high achievers' experiences (Kelly, 2018; Eccles & Wang, 2016). Emphasizing the need of building a supportive and understanding atmosphere that respects individual needs and objectives is the continual pressure to live up to others' expectations can have harmful impacts on students' well-being and motivation.

The decline in enthusiasm in academic pursuits was another subject that surfaced. Despite their impressive accomplishments, some participants reported a progressive loss of interest and passion for their studies. According to Suni et al. (2019), this result points to the possibility of academic burnout and emphasizes the need for educators and policymakers to address the causes of this loss of interest. Educational institutions must address this problem by giving students the chance to follow their passions, by offering a wide range of academic options, and by encouraging a good work-life balance. Students' enthusiasm in their studies can be rekindled by developing interesting and fulfilling learning experiences, providing a choice of academic opportunities, and encouraging a healthy work-life balance. Teachers can assist pupils maintain their excitement for learning throughout their high school years by fostering their interests and intrinsic motivation.

Procrastination and cramming become a common coping strategy used by high achievers to handle their intense workload and pressure. Participants admitted to procrastinating and doing last-minute cramming, which had a detrimental influence on their learning outcomes and raised their stress levels. This result is consistent with earlier studies that highlighted how these tactics have a negative impact on academic achievement (Milgram & Rosenbaum, 2020). Prioritizing work, breaking them down into digestible portions, and encouraging a regular study pattern are all things that educators and parents could offer advice on. By giving students these abilities, they can improve their academic performance overall, feel more self-sufficient, and experience less stress.

Distractions were a key subject that emerged from the interviews. High academic achievers indicated that they were easily distracted by social media, extracurricular activities, and personal interests. They were unable to focus and their study routine was wrecked by these disruptions. These interruptions show how critical it is to foster an environment that promotes uninterrupted, concentrated study time (Bürkner, 2017). To reduce distractions during study time, parents and schools should collaborate to create designated study rooms and employ technology management strategies. By reducing distractions, students can increase their attention, concentration, and production.

Family pressure was the final theme that was discovered. Participants described feeling intense family pressure to maintain excellent academic performance and meet predetermined expectations. This result is consistent with earlier research that shown the impact of familial expectations on academic success (Bui et al., 2019). It is crucial for parents to create a balance between encouraging their child's overall well-being and supporting their academic ambitions. Open

communication, reasonable expectations, and a focus on each student's unique needs and goals can help reduce stress and foster a healthy family dynamic.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research provides insights into the challenges faced by high academic achievers in senior high school, emphasizing the importance of targeted support and interventions. By addressing the themes of expectation and pressure from others, losing interest, "procrastination and cramming", distractions, and family pressure, educators, parents, and policymakers can create an environment that promotes the well-being, engagement, and academic success of high achievers. It is essential to prioritize a holistic approach to education, recognizing the individual needs and aspirations of students, and fostering a supportive and balanced learning environment.

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