



THE PLIGHT OF ATA-MANOBO SCHOLARS OF DATU JOSE A. LIBAYAO- DAVAO DEL NORTE STATE COLLEGE

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Abstract: *College life has always been challenging. Thus, college life may be the most difficult for an Indigenous scholar like the Ata-Manobo of DJAL-DNSC. This study delved into Ata-Manobo scholars' personal experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights as scholars. The study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach. Results revealed that Ata-Manobo scholars are brawling against their cultural practice of early marriage and now desire to teach education. Moreover, scholars showed difficulty in academics. Social and emotional distractions were also observed, like drinking alcohol with peers, calling and texting with a girlfriend; executing parental duties; lacking support from family; and worrying about the family at home. Commissioning someone as counsel who will guide them in their culture-related struggles and academic challenges may lighten their plight.*

Keywords: *Academic challenges, College life, Culture, Indigenous Peoples, Scholarship, Early Marriage*

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who has gone to college is brawling to earn a degree. Indigenous Peoples are among the poorest and the most disadvantaged individuals. Thus, Ata-Manobo's venture to earn a degree takes work. Absences and other academic-related challenges were noticed despite the free board and lodging, meals, and other benefits received as scholars. Tertiary Education is a path rarely traversed by Indigenous people. Wasting this opportunity is unacceptable and allowing them to fail without doing anything is reckless.

Increasing Indigenous people's participation in colleges and universities is the answer to reducing Indigenous disadvantage overall. Hence, it is vital to investigate and document the plight of the Ata-Manobo scholars on their venture to college life. The results and findings of this study may serve as a framework for creating effective classroom instruction and management. Also, this study is intended to inspire and give meaningful life-learned lessons to incoming Ata-Manobo scholars. Specifically, this study will answer the following questions: first, what are the experiences of the Ata-Manobo scholars of DJAL-DNSC; second, what are the coping mechanisms used by Ata-Manobo scholars to overcome the challenges; and third, what does Ata-Manobo gain the learning insights as scholars.

The establishment of the tertiary institution is indeed an answer to the economic and social problems of Ata-Manobo because Education is an indispensable tool for indigenous people to extricate themselves from poverty and discrimination (Stavenhagen, 2005, as cited by Jensen, 2005). Strategically, countries like Australia and New Zealand have been combating the problems faced by Indigenous Peoples through free Education (Sullivan, 2018). The Australian Government spends billions annually on Indigenous people (Biddle, 2016). Thus, the country's success stories of indigenous student scholars have also grown through the government initiative. A good number of IPs have become professionals, and more are taking the path of Education.

Education is renowned as a powerful tool in achieving better financial results, such as employment and income, and is known as one of the main strategies for addressing the Indigenous disadvantaged in Australia (Hunter & Schwab, 2003). Also, it has been established that individuals with higher educational qualifications are more likely to secure full-time jobs and have a higher income (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2008).

METHODS

Research Design

Since the study's goal was to gather information on the Plight of Ata-Manobo Scholars of Datu Jose A. Libayao-Davao del Norte State College, I employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological method. Denzin and Lincoln (1994), cited by Creswell (1998), defined Qualitative research as multimethod research involving interpretive and naturalistic approaches. I utilized Qualitative research design because my study was intended to be studied in its natural setting, and the phenomena were interpreted according to the informants' opinions on a specific issue.

Further, I made use of the phenomenological approach. Initially, phenomenology for Husserl (1938) explained how individuals give meaning to social phenomena in their everyday lives. This method is suited for my study because it explores how individuals make sense of the world by providing meanings and the classifications it employs (Reeves, S., Albert, M., Kuper, A., and Hodges, B.D., 2008). Since I documented the lived experiences of Ata-Manobo students in their everyday lives as a scholar indeed, it was appropriate in the concept of phenomenology. Also, I aimed to study the reality of individuals on their lived experiences, which made this technique ideal (Yuksel and Yildirim, 2015).

Participants and Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to choose participants. Second to third-year Ata-Manobo students, recipients of the Expanded Students' Grant-In-Aid Program for Poverty Alleviation (ESGP-PA) and Local Government Unit (LGU) scholarships, and students at Datu Jose A. Libayao-Davao del Norte State College were the inclusion criteria I set for participants in this study (DJAL-DNSC). In the purposive sampling approach, I chose my participants based on my inclusion criteria to ensure that the representation was acceptable for the studied phenomena.

I chose twelve students to participate. There were seven ladies and five guys. Five people were selected for the Focus Group Discussion and seven for the In-depth Interview. To capture diverse perspectives on the topic under study, the Ata-Manobo participants were male and female, young and old, single and married.

Data Collection

I used Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and In-depth Interviews (IDI) to collect their responses in this study. With their agreement, I also used triangulation techniques to validate the participants' replies. Guide questions, a tape recorder, and a video camera were used to validate their replies. Initially, the researcher developed the guiding questions and presented them to the adviser for revision. The draft was then given to four validators for additional improvement. I verified that the following processes were followed with the panel's approval and before data collection. Secondly, a request letter was written to the OIC President of HCDC requesting permission to perform this study. A letter of authorization to conduct the study was also issued to the DNSC Office of the President, with the Dean of the Institute of Management, Governance, and Continuing Studies' consent.

Before data collection, I identified 12 participants with the assistance of the resident instructor as my gatekeeper. Initially, the participants' teacher introduced me and described the objective of my visit before I took over. Dealing with them was relatively easy because I had already met the attendees at their values development program, where I was one of the presenters. I took advantage of the chance to mingle with them and joke with them while describing my function in research, the title of my study, their participation in the completion of my study, and their future contribution to their community.

The second time we met for data collection, I separated the participants into two groups: five for the Focus Group Discussion and seven for the In-depth Interview. Participants in the FGD and IDI got a complete copy of the interview guide questions. I asked them if the translations were precise and if they had any complaints or recommendations. I instructed everyone to prepare an overview of their response for a straightforward discussion the following day. The participants were given a letter of consent on the day of data collection. I thoroughly described the research protocol and its rights. The participants were then asked to sign a letter affirming their desire to participate in the



study. The focus group discussion and the in-depth Interview took place at the DJAL-DNSC classroom in Talaingod, Davao Del Norte. In addition, I requested the participants for permission to record the Interview on video and audio.

I led a focus group discussion with five people: three women and two men. Participants were called by their seat number at the discussion table to maintain secrecy. Seven individuals were exposed to in-depth interviews to strengthen and validate the findings. The data from FGD and IDI were similar and connected, completing the triangulation technique's components. According to Creswell (2003), triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates data validation through the cross-examination of more than two sources, the first of which is the related literature on the plight of Ata-Manobo scholars; the second is the result of focus group discussion; and the third is the result of in-depth interviews.

RESULTS

The data I gathered on the academics' experiences were divided into two categories: good and negative. Three key themes arose from the data collected on their experiences. The first and second significant themes were the IP academics' unpleasant experiences, while the third theme was their favorable experiences. Academic difficulties and social and emotional distractions were classified as adverse experiences. The third and most beneficial theme is comfort and convenience as scholars.

Five key themes challenge the academics of Ata-Manobo of DJAL-DNSC under the significant theme of difficulty in academics. They were as follows: struggles with boredom and sleepiness in class; difficulties with mathematics and science; difficulties with memorizing and pronouncing; problems with poor self-concept; and destructive weeklong absences. The second central theme of the Ata-Manobo scholars' experiences was social and emotional distractions. Five major themes arose from the in-depth interview and focus group discussion. The scholars' social and emotional distractions include drinking sessions with peers; calling and texting with a girlfriend; executing parental duties; lacking support from family; and thinking about the family at home.

Ease and convenience of scholars was the third central theme that answered the study's first objective. The ease and convenience experienced by scholars were categorized as positive experiences. The following core ideas were as follows: parents are relieved of financial obligation; tuition, books, dorm, and food are provided; and just a passing grade is required.

I developed three main themes based on the coping mechanisms experienced by Ata-Manobo scholars which emerged from the responses. These themes were: focusing and doubling effort, going away from distraction, and seeking support from others. I gathered four sub-themes under the central theme, focusing and doubling effort. These themes were: taking notes and focusing on listening to the teacher; praying and practicing self-control; studying hard and studying well; and making up for absences. Most of the participants' responses on their coping mechanisms led to the central theme: going away from distractions. I gathered three sub-themes, from which the central theme of going away from distraction emerged. They refused to go out with peers; broke up with girlfriend; and kept themselves busy. On the third central theme, "seeking support from others," three sub-themes were generated from the participants' responses. They were as follows: asking for help from classmates, seeking support from the teacher, and asking for assistance from family.

In the third objective, I came up with three main themes from the responses. These themes are the aspiration to alleviate poverty and serve the tribal community; scholars should stay rooted and proud of tribal identity, resistance to early marriage, and inculcating education.

From the significant themes of alleviating poverty and serving the tribal community, I gathered four sub-themes. The goals were to free the family from poverty, help the neighborhood, assist the tribe, and improve the lot. Scholars should stay rooted and proud of tribal identity, which is the second central theme that answers the third objective. I generated three sub-themes, and they were as follows; be proud of one's origin; let people know that we are not hugawan and damak, and not be affected by bullies who look down on lumads.

I came up with four sub-themes for the third central theme, resistance to early marriage and inculcating education. They were as follows; hope that parents will encourage children to pursue tertiary education; teach parents not to engage children in early marriage; IPs are not just meant to live in the mountains and bear children; and early marriage will only hamper the brighter future.

ANALYSIS

Experiences of the Ata-Manobo Scholars of Datu Jose A. Libayao- Davao del Norte State College Difficulty in Academics

Three major or significant themes were gathered from the responses on the first objective, and the first significant theme was the difficulty in academics. Under which are five core ideas, and they were as follows: struggle from boredom and sleepiness in class; difficulty in mathematics and science; difficulty in memorizing and pronouncing; baffling with negative self-concept; and destructive weeklong absences. Almost all the participants disclosed that they were having difficulty in their academics, and many acknowledged that they had low grades.

Struggle with Boredom and Sleepiness. One of the sub-themes that resembled the central theme was the scholars' struggle with boredom and sleepiness. One of the focus group participants and one of the in-depth interview participants were so bored inside the classroom that they fell asleep. Both noted and blamed classroom instruction for their boredom and sleepiness. Participant 1 the in-depth Interview, associated the concept of boredom with all his school experiences, sought the opinions of his peers, and recommended quitting. According to Guimba et al. (2015), when scholars had grades lower than necessary, and some even failed, these failures would be attributed to inept professors, a shortage of books in the library, inadequate academic loading, and a delayed enrollment procedure. However, as Nelson (2007) describes it in the case of Papua New Guinea, professors' lack of interest may be related to the IP's mixed ideas on the importance of Education. Papua New Guinea had a long history of difficult issues, including low retention rates, inadequate literacy, and Indigenous students' mixed opinions regarding the importance of Education.

Difficulty in Mathematics and Science. An FGD participant revealed his problems with mathematics, while many others admitted to struggling with science, which was the second sub-theme under the difficulty in academics. The participant's dread of mathematics was evident in his comments, and he hoped and prayed that there would be no more mathematical topics in the second semester. The participant was not alone in his mathematical struggles. Indeed, this was also true for Indigenous (Aboriginal) pupils in Australia. Aboriginal pupils in Australia routinely fared poorly in mathematics and literacy assessments (Yeung et al., 2013), cited by (Tarbetsky et al., 2016). Another event the scholars had that caused them difficulty was their main science course. All the focus groups shared the same problem in science, especially in memorizing and pronouncing scientific names.

Difficulty in Memorizing and Pronouncing. The scholars' difficulties memorizing and pronouncing were the third sub-theme that mirrored the main topic. As part of their primary science topic in agriculture, students must memorize the scientific names of plants and weeds. The difficulties encountered by the Ata-Manobo scholars of DJAL-DNSC in science and mathematics topics were shared by other Indigenous Peoples groups. According to Howlett et al. (2008), the belief that Indigenous Peoples did not do well in mathematics and science was pervasive and might have a detrimental impact on self-image.

Furthermore, Indigenous knowledge and resources have been explored as scientific objects. This research framed Indigenous knowledge as "inferior" (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999, cited by Howlett et al., 2008). According to Howlett et al. (2008), Nakata (2007) noted that Indigenous knowledge was generally seen as something that did not include science.

Baffling with Negative Self-concept. The fourth fundamental thought, or sub-theme, was associated with the participant's lack of proficiency in Mathematics and Science. Whatever the reason, the low performance of the Ata-Manobo academics in Mathematics and Science would eventually result in a negative self-concept. Negative self-concept was also mentioned as a significant reason Indigenous students perceived university education as an unpopular choice across



Australia's states. Indigenous students studying at Australian institutions quickly drop out, especially if they encounter anything too challenging. Indigenous pupils believed that they were not up to a challenging task because they knew they could not accomplish it. That was why if something difficult gets in the way of indigenous university students, they quit or pull out immediately (Hossain et al., 2008).

As I explored another approach, I realized that adjustment might be causing the Ata-Manobos' scholastic difficulties because several of their tough events occurred during their first year of education. According to Oliver et al. (2015), the first semester and the first year was essential for Indigenous students. Anyone can find university intimidating. Students from rural and distant places need help to acclimate to university life. According to Neale (2017), many indigenous students see university culture as an alien culture. This was the cause of the high dropout rate among Australia's Indigenous students in their first year (Neale, 2017).

Destructive Weeklong Absences. The last core idea under the first major theme was the scholars' destructive weeklong absences. Weeklong or the scholars' consecutive absences can also be gleaned from the responses of FGD participants and the participants of in-depth Interviews. Participants from FGD and IDI acknowledged that their consecutive absences contributed to their low grades. The first participant who had a week or more absences attributed it to collecting his enrollment credentials. The second participant was a mother who had weeklong absences when she attended to her child's needs for a check-up and was admitted to the hospital. The third participant was a single mother. The series of absences she committed was due to her baby's sickness. She also expressed her grief when there were times that she had to leave her baby having a fever without taking any medicine. The fourth participant attributed her absences when her mother died. She lost her motivation to go back to school.

Social and Emotional Distractions

The second major theme of the experiences of the Ata-Manobo scholars was social and emotional distractions. I found four core ideas from the in-depth Interview and focus group discussion. As I defined distraction in the context of the scholars, it meant disturbances brought by peers, girlfriends, and filial concerns, which affected the scholars either in study habits or attendance. The following are the scholars' distractions, socially and emotionally: drinking sessions with peers; calling and texting with a girlfriend; executing parental duties; lacking support from family; and worrying of the family at home.

Drinking Sessions with Peers. One of the in-depth interview participants informed me that he preferred to spend time with his classmates and be joyful over studying, even if test day was coming. He went on to say that when they came, they were already drunk and fell asleep immediately away. In this context, peers were seen as the participant's social distractors. The same was true for those who took part in the focus group. He told me that he was drinking with his fellow scholars since they were all on the same team. Members of the group pitched in to help them raise enough to buy some liquor.

Calling and Texting Girlfriend. The second core idea under the major theme of distraction socially and emotionally was busy calling and texting with his girlfriend throughout study time. One of the attendees told me about his experiences with a girlfriend who was also a scholar. Having a girlfriend made him sluggish when it came to studying. An FGD participant told me that he was on the Dean's list in the first semester but dropped out in the second. According to Guimba et al. (2015), two of his scholar participants were also involved in a relationship, and one of them experienced a negative influence. When they encountered troubles, the scholar grew preoccupied to the point that she could not study effectively. According to Guldner (1996), as reported by Guimba et al. (2015), relationships were an essential element of college life. Students get interested in romantic relationships while in college (Hambre, 2005).

Executing Parental Duties. Executing parental duties did not only affect parent scholars through weeklong absences but also in time management and emotional distraction. This emotional distraction was too difficult that it affected the indigenous parent scholar heavily. The generated finding was affirmed by ABS (2011), as cited by Oliver et al. (2015), that mature-aged students,



particularly women, comprised a substantial proportion of the Aboriginal student population. Further, Flood (2013), as cited by Oliver et al. (2015), mentioned that several students had to manage their study load with familial responsibilities. Due to the complicated status of Ata-Manobo scholars, filial, marital, and parental obligations arose. One of the FGD participants narrated her worries, concerns, and obligation as a mother, instigating her absences for a week.

In some cases, according to Oliver et al. (2015), the family's health issues could impact study time. This included dealing with many sicknesses, tragedies, and even deaths in the region and the community. Another FGD participant who was a solo parent shared her anguish when her child got sick, especially when she had no money to buy medicine, which triggered the idea of quitting her studies. Congruently, Oliver et al. (2015) noted that the stress of managing family responsibilities along with their course workload was a potential reason for withdrawing. Flood (2013), as cited by Oliver et al. (2015), added that Aboriginal women often postpone their studies because of family responsibilities.

Lacking Support from Family. Accordingly, when a person is married, marital problems would surely exist, like a sexual obligation and how the husband views Education. On the other hand, one of the participants of IDI strongly fought for her reason to study when they quarreled with her husband. The participant's experience of the lack of support from family members was also true in the study of Devlin (2009). He confirmed that a lack of family support for financial or for studies could be more helpful and possibly beneficial for indigenous scholars. Likewise, Miller (2005), as cited by Hossain et al. (2009), supported that lack of family support was identified as a key barrier to achieving their aspirations.

Worrying of the Family at Home. Generally, Ata-Manobo scholars with their families lived in scarcity. Family members in Indigenous settings worked with their parents in tilling their land for a living. The eldest of the family had a bigger responsibility next to their parents. Congruently, the study of Guimba et al. (2015) on Muslim scholars affirmed that the eldest of the family, when it comes to the family's financial problems at home, was given heavier responsibility. It often distracts the student from his or her studies. One of the FGD participants' father got sick and passed away.

Moreover, one of the participants of IDI shared a similar sentiment about his siblings. He came from a broken family. His parents separated, and his siblings were living separately with his mother. With the existing situation, they could not avoid but think of their family at home. These experiences were also observed by Charlton and David (1993). According to them, one problem that mostly impacts the emotional problem of an individual is the family at home.

Ease and Convenience of Scholars

The ease and convenience experienced by scholars were categorized as their positive experiences. The scholars' responses reflected their previous high school years, wherein they experienced the life of typical Indigenous students. The following core ideas were as follows: parents are relieved of financial obligation; tuition, books, dorm, and food are provided; and a passing grade is required.

Parents are Relieved of Financial Obligation. The participants' responses, from FGD and IDI, were full of amazement and thanksgiving when they became scholars. One of those amazement and thanksgiving included the first sub-theme wherein parents were relieved from financial obligation. The ease and convenience wasscholars were not only for themselves but also for their parents. Many FGD participants expressed their gratitude for the financial benefits that made their lives and their parents' easy and convenient. Participant 3 of the in-depth added that his parents would not have to work hard.

Tuition, Allowance, Books, Dorm, and Food are Provided. Under the major theme of ease and convenience of scholars, another sub-theme was free tuition, allowance, book allowance, board, lodging, and meals. Participant 5 expressed her gratefulness for being a scholar and mentioned more than financial assistance. She cited the convenience of having a guardian who would prepare their meals, and it was free. The ease and convenience of Ata-Manobo as a scholar were also relished by the Indigenous scholars of Pamulaan. Indigenous students of Pamulaan were on



scholarship, meaning they were provided with free board and lodging, tuition, books, and miscellaneous expenses are free (Sitay, 2016).

Just a Passing Grade is Required. The third and the last sub-theme under ease and convenience of a scholar, and maybe the most favorable for them, was the lack of a grade requirement: only a passing grade is required. Unlike other scholarship programs that need scholars to have a higher average, such as 85% or more, the scholarship they have merely required a passing mark.

Ease and convenience from scholarship benefits were also enjoyed by the University of Southern Queensland Indigenous scholars in the study of Hossain et al. (2008). Some of the provisions of scholarships were mentioned like bursaries to purchase textbooks, which were considered as their key incentives. Most students also emphasized financial assistance, access to computers and the internet, and good sporting and social facilities.

Coping Mechanisms Experienced by Ata-Manobo Scholars

I came up with three main themes that emerged from the responses. These themes were: focusing and doubling effort, going away from distraction, and seeking support from others. These actions were taken after the IP scholars had trouble in academics and were distracted socially and emotionally by their friends, special someone, members of the family, and their inclinations.

Focusing and Doubling of Effort

Focusing and doubling of effort were gleaned from the responses of Ata-Manobo scholars as a mechanism to cope with their difficulties in academics like boredom and sleepiness in class; difficulty in mathematics and science; difficulty in memorizing and pronouncing; and destructive weeklong absences. Coping mechanisms for some of the social and emotional distractions, such as drinking sessions with peers, calling and texting girlfriend, and thinking of the family at home, could also be found in this significant theme. From the participants' responses, I gathered three sub-themes. These themes were: taking notes and focusing on listening to the teacher, praying and self-control, and studying hard and studying well.

Taking Notes and Focus on Listening to the Teacher. The first sub-theme taking notes and focusing on listening to the teacher was the answer of one of the FGD participants when she realized that listening alone was not enough to recall their teacher's lectures. She emphasized that one must take notes because not all the lessons would sink in. A participant from my in-depth Interview was also doing the same thing as the FGD participant was doing. He strongly suggested that if there is a class, one should attend and jot down notes to remember.

Praying and Self-control. Another participant from the in-depth Interview, with a strong and determined view of life, had a systematic plan to achieve his dreams. His way of fulfilling it was prayer with self-control. His focus was on controlling himself. For him, one must not abuse oneself. Therefore, no vices are allowed, and gadgets should not affect one. As a routine, before going to bed, one must study and then pray. It was also essential to have enough sleep. He also hoped that it would be wonderful if one had self-control.

Studying hard and studying well, the third sub-theme was identified by one of my FGD participants when his low grades antagonized him, so he demonstrated focus and doubled his effort by improving his way of studying. He also showed the importance of knowing one's learning style to make studying more effective. A participant from my in-depth Interview demonstrated focus and doubling of effort in studying. Because he really had difficulty understanding the lessons, he made everything understandable, even if it meant studying until dawn.

Going away from Distractions

Most of the participants' responses on their coping mechanisms led to the significant theme: going away from distractions. Most of the participants did not pay attention to certain actions that would lead them to a problematic situation. Few of them were aware but did not bother to do any. From the responses generated from the above questions, I gathered three sub-themes, from which the central theme of going away from distraction emerged. They were refused to go out with peers, broke up with girlfriends, and made themselves busy.

Refused to go out with Peers. When confronted with negative consequences and wanting to avoid distraction, refusing to go out with friends was the greatest strategy to cope with being socially

distracted by peers. One of the male focus group members who were on the team and engaged in a drinking session mentioned avoiding his peers and refusing to go out with them. While Participant 3 from the in-depth Interview, who was also a team member and participated in drinking sessions, stated that joyful times should be avoided, and consuming liquor should be avoided to emphasize academics.

Broke-up with Girlfriend. The next sub-theme going from distraction was the break-up with the girlfriend. When managed correctly, romantic relationships in college may make life more enjoyable. However, if it is mismanaged, the negative consequences will undoubtedly increase, just as a Muslim scholar was preoccupied when she and her lover had troubles, to the point that she couldn't study adequately (Guimba et al., 2015). He ended their relationship when the Ata-Manobo scholar and his girlfriend were having conflicts. He also informed me that he grew preoccupied with contacting and messaging his girlfriend even when he was studying. He also told me that he became busy calling and texting his girlfriend, even during study time. Engaging in a relationship brought him a distraction.

Made Oneself Busy. The third and last sub-theme is making oneself busy. The participant was caught between his obligations and responsibilities to his family and his ambition to obtain a degree. He was already a scholar when his father died of a stroke caused by hypertension. But he chose to stay and keep himself busy. Coherently, an IDI participant kept herself occupied with reading and other valuable activities to avoid distractions. Making oneself occupied as a means of avoiding attention was also adopted by Indigenous scholars of Pamulaan. Active engagement in school activities, such as forming study groups, was identified as a coping method of IP scholars in Sitay's (2016) study.

Seeking Support from Others

Finally, among the coping mechanisms of Ata-Manobo scholars was seeking support from others. Lawrence (2005), cited by Devlin (2009), put it as sociocultural capabilities. Devlin remarked that asking for support at university in appropriate ways was necessary for success at university. Three sub-themes were generated from the participants' responses. They were as follows: asking for help from a classmate, seeking support from the teacher, and asking for assistance from family.

Asking for help from classmates. Indigenous students felt it crucial to create and maintain ties with academic and general staff members, according to Hossain et al. (2008). It is critical for IP scholars to know that they can talk to someone if they need to. Similarly, the FGD participant who had weeklong absences while processing his credentials sought the assistance of his classmates to make up for lost classes. One of the study's participants, Hossain et al. (2008), emphasized the need to talk to an Indigenous person, especially when he or she is in difficulties or behind in his or her work because an IP would undoubtedly understand an IP.

Seeking Support from Teacher. Scholars sought the assistance of their professors in addition to their classmates. Indeed, an FGD participant asked his indigenous peers for not only assistance but also his teacher. Another student of Hossain et al. (2008) agreed that the interaction between students and professors is critical, especially when assistance is required. Discussing one's difficulties with a teacher would be a wise idea. When one of the IDI participants confronted a significant and confidential dilemma, she instantly thought of telling her teacher the truth.

Asking for Assistance from Family. The final sub-topic on the central theme of asking for help from others was asking for help from family members. Support from family members was most evident as an impediment at university and is seen as the most crucial aspect of the student's success. A participant finished university only because of strong family support (Oliver et al., 2015). For further enlightenment about the support needed by indigenous scholars, Hossain et al. (2008) identified support as one of students' perceived needs and aspirations. Indigenous students needed assistance in meeting these significant academic demands, such as tutorial assistance, learning support, academic assistance, and computer facilities.

In addition, students indicated that they needed some financial support (scholarship), employment opportunities, and social support such as orientation, multicultural activities, sociocultural support, support for physical disabilities, childcare facilities, a sense of belonging, and group



accommodation to help them complete their university studies faster. Almost all Australian institutions support and aid Indigenous students (Nolan et al., 2009).

Learning Insights Gained by the Experiences of Ata-Manobo Scholars

From the data I collected during the in-depth interview and focus group discussion, I developed three main themes from the responses. These themes are the aspiration to alleviate poverty and serve the tribal community, scholars should stay rooted and proud of tribal identity, and resistance to early marriage and inculcating education.

Aspirations to Alleviate Poverty and Serve Tribal Community

When I asked the scholars about their reasons why they went to school, their responses were rooted in the aspirations to liberate the family from poverty, serve the tribal community, and help the tribe to improve the lot. This theme signifies Ata-Manobo's motivation for their venture into college life as a scholar. Motivation was frequently described as a student's energy and drive to engage in learning activities (Martin, 2003). Theoretical lenses of my research, such as achievement motivation theory, goal setting theory of motivation, and attribution theory of achievement, were also found in this theme.

Liberate Family from Poverty. The first sub-theme that represented this overarching theme was to lift families out of poverty. Participants 1 and 4 of IDI had common goals of finishing their Education and raising their families out of poverty. However, they also drew their plans from their ancestors and their own negative experiences. According to participants 1 and 4 of the in-depth Interview, liberating their family from poverty was not the only incentive; they also agreed with Oliver et al. (2015) argument that he becomes empowered through respect and awareness of their ancestors' history and present challenges.

Serve the Community. The second sub-theme was community service. Being kind and mindful of their origins is profoundly ingrained and taught in them. The ambition of Ata-Manobo scholars to reduce poverty for themselves and their families does not stop there; they also wish to help the tribal community. Participants in the focus group testified that they wanted to complete their studies to help the community. For them, educating oneself was synonymous with serving the community. Oliver et al. (2015) saw Aboriginality as a resource that helped them focus on their goals. Furthermore, several Indigenous students thought that studying would allow them to better the situation of indigenous people by either leading by example or working with the people in their community (Lewis et al., 2000).

Help the Tribe and Improve the Lot. The third sub-theme under the goal to reduce poverty and serve the tribal community was to assist the tribe and make significant improvements. Indigenous people aspire to better their situations by leading by example in their society, as stated by Lewis et al. (2000). One of my FGD participants exhibited his desire to better their lot since it is appropriate for him and their ancestral region. The participant's thought of assisting the community by using what he learned from agriculture was connected to the participant's point of view in the Oliver et al. research (2015). Furthermore, the participants wished to offer their family a better life and contribute to society through their chosen discipline.

Scholars Should Stay Rooted and Proud of Tribal Identity

Another major theme that emerged in the responses on the insights gained from their experiences as a scholar was that scholars should stay rooted and proud of their tribal identity. From the participants' responses, I gathered three sub-themes. These were: being proud of one's origin; letting people know that we are not "hugawan" or damak, and not being affected by bullies who looked down on lumad.

Being Proud of One's Origin. A participant in an in-depth Interview left a reminder to incoming IP scholars to pay respect to their tribe and to be proud of their heritage as natives of Talaingod. This sub-theme was coherent with the study of Lewis et al. (2000) on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander University Students' conceptions of formal learning and experiences of informal learning. He further revealed that students respected the Aboriginal elders and that a lot could be learned from them, like acquiring cultural and social knowledge.



Let People know we are not "hugawan" or "damak." The fourth sub-theme under scholars should stay rooted and proud of tribal identity was letting people know that lumads are not "hugawan" or "damak." One of the most excruciating experiences of the indigenous scholars was being branded as "hugawan" or "damak." This experience gave them the courage to prove to the people and let them know they were not "hugawan" or "damak" to counter those who tagged them.

Not be affected by Bullies who look Down on Lumads. The third and last sub-theme was not to be affected by bullies who look down on lumads. An FGD participant who experienced discrimination expressed her sentiments about the locals' impression of the lumads. Indigenous scholars were turned down because they were lumad or native, filthy, and could not graduate. Her experience led to the sub-theme of not being affected by bullies who looked down on lumads. She firmly believed they could excel in life despite being "lumad." The experience of the Ata-Manobo scholars in bullying, discrimination, and ingrained racist attitudes, according to Hossain et al. (2008), were identified as critical barriers to achieving Indigenous scholars' aspirations.

Resistance to Early Marriage and Inculcate Education

On the third major theme, resistance to early marriage and inculcating Education, I came up with four sub-themes. They were as follows; hope that parents will encourage children to pursue tertiary Education; teach parents not to engage children in early marriage; IPs are not just meant to live in the mountains and bear children; and early marriage will only hamper the brighter future.

Hope that Parents will Encourage Children to Pursue Tertiary Education. One married female IDI participant expressed her hope that more lumad may benefit from the Government's scholarship scheme. She also hoped parents would encourage their children to seek a college education.

Teach Parents not to Engage Children in Early Marriage; Prioritize Education. A married female focus group participant agreed that lumad youths should complete their degrees. She said that most of them were pressured to marry at a young age. She devised a plan to educate parents about the dangers of allowing their children to marry without a college education.

IPs are not just meant to live in the Mountain and Bear Children. An FGD participant responded seriously and stated on the nature of their habitation that they are not just designed to live in the mountains; they are not simply meant to farm and produce babies.

Early marriage will only hamper a Brighter future. In an in-depth interview, a male participant confirmed that they married at a young age. Lumad married before completing their education. If he is to teach the future generation of IP scholars, it is to avoid getting married at a young age. He said that their early marriage blocked their path to a better future. Early marriage, one of Indigenous Peoples' traditional traditions, was identified in the discussion paper of IWGIA and Tebtebba (2015) as one of the hurdles to Indigenous Peoples fully enjoying their right to education. The Ata-Manobo people of Davao del Norte also practiced early marriage. Industan (1992) said Ata-Manobo women married as young as six. He also recognized four Ata-Manobo marital traditions.

CONCLUSION

DJAL-DNSC, the tertiary institution amid the ancestral domain of Ata-Manobo, is the long-awaited solution to their problem among the poorest and most disadvantaged individuals. It is almost a complete educational package. However, this solution would not be a complete package if the plight of Ata-Manobo scholars continued to hinder them from pursuing their degrees. Therefore, the following findings of the study may be addressed first.

The study's findings revealed the difficulties, ease, and convenience of being a scholar. Under the umbrella of problems, two major themes emerged: difficulty in academics and social and emotional distractions. The third theme, categorized as positive, is the ease and convenience of scholars. On the second objective, findings revealed three major themes regarding the coping mechanisms of the scholars, first focusing and doubling effort; second, going away from distraction; and third, seeking support from others. Lastly, I came up with three major themes for the third objective. These themes are the aspiration to alleviate poverty and serve the tribal community. Scholars should stay rooted and proud of tribal identity, resist early marriage, and inculcate education.


Further and broader research should be conducted to strengthen the research findings. To the indigenous scholars, I suggest that further research be performed on the social and emotional distractions caused by family, friends, and personal related problems to reach their maximum potential. DJAL-DNSC Management, this study serves as their basis in formulating possible intervention programs to provide reasonable assistance for Indigenous scholars. Classroom instruction and management may also be looked into. Parents of the Ata-Manobo Community, I hope the generated findings will affect them and the next generation of Indigenous students, especially since the theme resists early marriage and inculcates education. This theme shows the resistance of Indigenous scholars to their cultural practice of early marriage. Future Researcher, I recommend that the theme of resisting early marriage and inculcating education be a subject of study for research to dig deeper into the Indigenous scholar's cultural practices that could affect their future undertakings.

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