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A Journey Uncovered: Adjustments of Foreign Senior High School Students in Philippine School Doha

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Abstract: *Background: Being new to a school is a challenge. Though this manifestation may vary, it is familiar to new students. Since the transfer of Philippine School Doha to a new campus, the population increased for it accepted international students. It motivated the researchers to know the adjustment journey of international students. Method: This qualitative paper made use of a phenomenological research design to fully understand the experiences of foreign students who were enrolled in Philippine School Doha by answering the central question, “How do foreign senior high students adjust in Philippine School Doha?” The data gathered through a two-part instrument, a consent letter, and audio recording. Data collected were analysed using an inductive approach in theme development. Findings: Findings have shown the adjustment journey of foreign senior high school students in terms of academics, non-academic involvement, and ethnicity. Conclusion: With the increasing number of international students, Philippine School Doha has enhanced the quality of service in terms of providing programs that could lessen the learning difficulty of international students. Recommendation: To help the international students adjust to a new environment, the school should strengthen existing reinforcement programs focusing on the understanding of the students’ immediate need to learn to speak and understand the Filipino language.*

Keywords: *Foreign students, Philippine School Doha, the Filipino community, adjust, quality education, qualities, experience, journey*

I. INTRODUCTION

Challenges and struggles were occurrences that may affect the adjustment process of an individual to a school with a diverse culture and unique learning programs. These experiences usually occur and noticeable to the newly transferred students. The learning process and knowledge acquisition could be a significant aspect of adjustments as they are unaccustomed to various features in the school’s curriculum. Also, gaining support in with others could be challenging since barriers in communication may occur during the process of adjustment. These indicators are recognizable to the foreign senior high school students of Philippine School Doha. Since they are new and cannot speak the Filipino language, which Filipino students often used in communicating, it could be the reason for them to lessen their interaction with others. Since the beginning, knowledge has helped people to survive. Although learning always begins at home, it is recognizable that school is an institution that helped in the development of the students’ learning process. It gives them the chance to acquire knowledge in various fields of education, such as people, literature, history, mathematics, politics, and other numerous subjects (Sharma, 2019). Through the support of the school, people acquired and used that knowledge to shape them into responsible and productive citizens of society (Chavan, 2018). It assisted them in enhancing and developing their holistic being. Also, it created a high impact on the aptitude and attitude of the child later in life (Dr. Kaushik and Marwaha, 2019). Therefore, a school is vital to the development of one’s child since it is a place where they can learn and improve their skills through participating in different activities that the school offers (Collins, 2019). Hence, learning is not only acquired inside the classroom but also through various academic and non-academic activities set by the school.

Different school activities that are associated with their educational development helped them to be creative, evaluative, and be able to analysed and engaged in developing technology and answering questions that are not clearly understood (Vigeant, 2016). It will also help them prepare to change for the better and encourage interpretive thinking and development skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity (Sweeney, 2016). It is also a haven that helped students to endure challenges that may they may face along the way. These challenges may be true to some, but also confusing to others, particularly to a new transferee when they do not know anyone (Ackerman, 2016). Since new students come from different places intellectually, socially, and emotionally (Meador, 2019), they have difficulty in establishing friend groups and regular routines (King and Binghamton, 2018).

As a new student, many challenging adjustments are being experienced. Such adjustments include academic pressure, due to a variety of subjects to be learned, hectic classroom schedules and extracurricular timings that are way different from the previous school, and teachers' dynamic in teaching that can also affect the adjustment period of a new student. Being part of a much bigger and less individual system as well as social pressures of trying to fit in with a new social group and making friends (Sharry, 2017) identified these indicators as contributors to the new student's adjustment dilemma. However, the most common adjustment problems encountered by the new students is how they will start a conversation, how they will interact, and how are they able to adjust with the new environment as well as coping with various cultural groups. This experiences may result to a wide range of adjustment in understanding and acceptance so that they may be able to establish, maintain, and revise themselves as they come in contact with different belief systems, values, social mores, and way of thinking and feeling (Alruwaili, 2017) of others.

Another challenging and most significant factor that contributes to the difficulty experienced by the new students is a sudden change of switching peer groups, adjusting to a new academic schedule, and leaving behind old friends (Morin, 2019). However, there are many ways to have a great first impression in school. Being friendly, being approachable, and getting involved with the class and school activities that are interesting (Taylor, 2019) will help you adjust quickly. Philippine School Doha, a Filipino community school which aims to provide excellent quality education to all, finally started to open its door to international students a year back. Building a connection with other students created a feeling of belongingness and acceptance that will enable them to enhance their abilities continually, see the value of their life, and cope with challenges (Lee, 2019) in the new environment.

Challenges should be taken logically and try not to jump to conclusions while attempting to resolve concerns (Loretto, 2019). There many challenges that new students face, such as getting enough sleep, bullying, and participating in extracurricular activities (Travis, 2019). These challenges may easily overcome through accepting it and feel the excitement in meeting new people and building new friendships, but also to experience some homesickness (Clarke, 2018).

II. METHOD

A. Research Design

The method utilized in collecting the data required for this study was done through an interview, as a qualitative research interview aims to study the phenomena and its meaning experienced by the participants (Qureshi et al., 2019). This study is to understand their feelings and opinions towards the given questions asked in the interview. To be able to produce themes and the framework, questions correlated to the central question were asked and examined afterward. This study embodies a phenomenological design because it gets from the real experience of the foreign or international students on how and what makes them adjust through the essence of the human condition contained by their lived experience (Qutoshi, 2018). Phenomenological research is a philosophical proposition that researchers can gain valuable insight into the structure of how people understand their experiences (Bliss, 2016). Douglas Adams once said, "Human beings, who are almost unique in having the ability to learn from the experience of others, are also remarkable for their apparent disinclination to do so (Neubauer, 2019)." The focus of this study is the lived experience of the senior high school students in the Philippines, the academic, non-academic involvement, and ethnicity difficulties that they experience and its consequences to their adjustment in school.

B. Research Locus and Sample

The participants of this study were composed of six foreign or international senior high school students currently enrolled in Philippine School Doha. The selection of the six participants was through a quantitative non-probability sampling strategy. This method was characterized based on the student's experiences during their stay in Philippine School Doha.

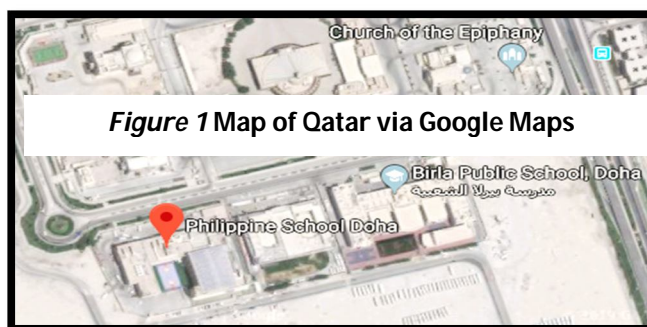


Figure 2 Location of Philippine School Doha at Al Messiah, Doha, Qatar taken from Google Maps

C. Data Collection and Ethical Consideration

To be able to achieve compendious of the phenomenon of this study, the researchers made use of a two-part instrument, a consent letter, and audio recording. A consent letter is a shred of documentary evidence that the researcher is allowed to interview a particular interview (Mehra, 2017). It was presented to the interviewees as validated by research instructors and attached to it is the Robotfoto; it refers to personal data sheets of the research respondents, which include their vital personal and professional information (de Guzman and Tan, 2007). It includes the respondent’s name, gender, civil status, contact number, email, address, and years of stay in Qatar. The interviewers made use of an audio recording device to record the respondents’ answers, which were decoded and further analyzed by the researchers after the interview. An interview refers to interactive communication between two or more people that aims to accumulate information from the participants by asking questions. Professional panelists were requested, and the preliminary defense conducted to enhance the research title and research questions comprehensively. The researchers request selected professionals to validate the interview questionnaires to improve the quality content of the research study. Pre-Determined questions with thirty-one semi-structured interview items initiated into a conversational manner wherein the participants were given a chance to elucidate more on the matters discussed (Clifford et al., 2010). The researchers were assigned individually to conduct interviews with international students in the senior high school department. Hence, the participants were informed and agreed before the conduct of the interview.

D. Data Analysis

The researchers aim to consider incorporate the phenomenon of the study with the use of a descriptive phenomenological method. The analysis is being done by observing the gathered statements from the respondents and are examined by following these steps: (1) reading the transcribed data thoroughly in order to grasp a comprehensive understanding of the point of view; (2) pinpointing small units called the meaning units; applying the etic perspective; the researchers’ fundamental understanding, through revising the transcribed emic responses of the interviewees; (3) applying the etic perspective; the researchers’ basic understanding, through reviewing the transcribed emic responses of the interviewees; (4) classifying themes or brackets of the responses via dendogram; (5) creating a simulacrum or the visual representation of the findings; (6) subjecting arising themes to triangulation and member checking to increase the credibility and validity of the research (Noble and Heale, 2019).

III. FINDINGS

This phenomenological study describes the adjustment struggles of new foreign senior high school students in Philippine School Doha, specifically, in terms of the Philippine curriculum setting. It sought to know an appropriate system to help the school in the improvement of the existing specialized programs to cater to the basic needs of foreign Senior High School students. The interviewees were asked various queries are focusing on the central question, "How do foreign students adjust to Philippine School Doha?".

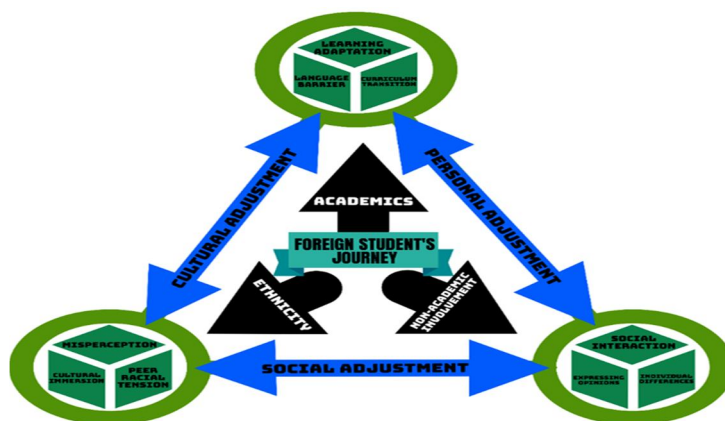


Figure 3 Shows the simulacrum focused on three major themes: Academics, Non- Academic Involvement and Ethnicity

Figure 3 shows the simulacrum focusing on the journey of foreign or international students with three significant themes: Academics, Non-academic Involvement, and Ethnicity. These represent the significant aspects of the student's transition process when transferred to a new school. Also, various sub-themes were identified, namely, personal, social, and cultural struggles. These difficulties were encountered by the international students in the Senior High School Department. Also, within the three sub-

themes, various thought units summarize the cause of each struggle. These manifestations contribute to the adjustment journey of international students. It is significant and essential to know where these adjustment struggles originated and to have an in-depth knowledge of the difficulties experienced so that the school can create programs to cater specific needs of the foreign senior high school students.

"I think the bad things that happened to me when I transferred was getting to adjust to a Filipino school in which curriculum is different from international school that I familiar with for a long time. It is a disadvantage for me". (P2)

"I am still overcoming that experiences because when you transfer from an old place to a new place, it takes time to adjust with a new culture and has to learn new things, interact with people, and having new lessons. Personally, learning from people, schools, and experiences is difficult". (P1)

Foreign senior high school students find difficulty in overcoming curriculum transition and learning adaptation adjustments. It plays a significant effect on the personal adjustment process of international students when transferred to a new school since it is an aspect that recognized as a hindrance to them. Also, having a new curriculum is somewhat a challenge to cope with knowing that it is different from what the new foreign senior high school students' previous school core curriculum.

"It is hard if the topics discussed are in Filipino, or the information is in Filipino. For me, discussions should always be taught in English since I am a foreigner. If it meant about the topics discussed in Filipino, then I do not understand anything because I am a foreigner". (P2)

"I had a difficulty of not being able to understand and not being familiarized with the words in since the beginning of classes." (P1)

"Having conversations with my classmates is hard because they would not understand my English, or they would have a hard time explaining something for me in English when I do not understand Filipino and the barrier between communication and language." (P2)

"It affects my communication in a bad way by being left out and having doubts about not being able to communicate with them anymore, and maybe them having a hard time talking to you in English because they are not used to it." (P2)

In the same way, the language barrier was also part of the difficulties in the adjustment journey of the respondents. Since international students were not native speakers of Filipino language, getting information or communicating with other students was hard for them if discussions used was in Filipino.

Since international students have their own unique culture and language, their involvement to non- academic programs of the new school was also compromised, and they struggle in communicating socially, and in expressing their opinions. Individual differences also affect their way of dealing and communicating with their classmates and new friends.

"Filipino culture, in general, were the things that are not easily adaptable since I have my own cultural beliefs and qualities. For this reason, I am having difficulty in adjusting to their culture". (P2)

"I do not like and do not follow the way Filipino students dressed because, in my culture, the manner of dressing is different from Filipino students." (P3)

"I cannot adopt the Filipino ways of dressing because I am not used to it, it will not look good on me, and I will feel uncomfortable because it is not my style." (P3)

From an individual perspective, an international student may not feel the need to implement the Filipino way of clothing because of personal taste and comfort.

As a final point, misperception, peer racial/ ethnic tension, and cultural immersion were occurrences that also contribute to the problems experienced by the newly transferred foreign senior high school students.

A. Academics

The interviewees said various responses regarding their academic performance in a new school setting. It identified that their learning behaviour and performances were related to how they personally and socially adjusted. Further, these adjustments made an impact on how they dealt with the sudden changes in their life as a student. It is imperative to know these manifestations so that they can quickly be assisted in their individual needs.

Advantages and disadvantages were considered in transferring to a new school, components identified generally include teachers, students, and curriculum. International students enrolled in Philippine School Doha treat the exposure to unfamiliar curriculum, meeting new people or forming social groups, and new knowledge acquisition as advantages of transferring to a new school. However, the respondents also considered "unfamiliar curriculum" being one of the cited benefits, as an impediment to their academic performance.

Foreign senior high school students have experienced difficulty in the curriculum transition. Since they are unaccustomed to the Philippine school curriculum setting, an adaptation of the latter was a challenge. Students who speak Filipino while socializing and communicating contributes to the adjustment journey of international students. These are apparent to the participant's following statements:

"The advantages of being in a new school are meeting new people, new environment, and more knowledge." (P4)

"For me, it is getting to know more people, seeing other curriculums, and just experiencing things like hardship in a different school." (P2)

The Philippine K to 12 curricula, language barrier, and social experiences recognized as significant struggles to the foreign senior high school students in adapting to their overall academic exposure. These three main matters were uncustomary to international students; hence, this took extended adjusting time and inconvenience to the international students.

"You get to learn new lessons, new curriculum of studies, so you need to cope up with that curriculum. Some people probably take six months or even more than a year to cope up, it is not easy to cope up". (P1)

"If you cannot understand the language that they are speaking and then you, a foreigner, trying to cope would sometimes be hard for you to understand them." (P3)

"Sometimes, you do not get to socialize with everyone." (P4)

Though international students of the senior high school have these difficulties, they learned to form a manner or means of coping with these difficulties. Learning to interact through the understanding of the Filipino student's body language, and dealing with these adjustments in a positive manner were among the many techniques of international students to be able to adjust to the new environment and harmonize with fellow Filipino classmates. Two participants identified expressing these approaches, "If you need to cope up with the new changes, you have to learn to be the best. You have to learn how they interact through their body language". (P1)

"I cope with the changes in a new school pretty well because it is my second year. I deal with it and go with the flow". (P2)

Also, teachers play a significant role in students' holistic growth and development. Thus, the teacher's form of approach to students may positively or negatively impact their academic involvement but also on their adjustment journey as a new student. One participant described the interaction between the teachers as welcoming, gives positive reinforcement by giving proper attention needed, and sees to it that they will communicate in a language known to every person in the class, including the international students.

Speaking English was seen as beneficial to these students since it is universally spoken and can be understood regardless of nationality and origin. One international student felt comforted by the teachers and felt at home with how the teachers cater to the participant's query. Teachers also reminded the student to inquire if a particular lesson did not understand.

"The teachers were warm. They would give attention if I needed it and try to only speak in English". (P4)

"It was nice because they comforted me and made me feel at home, they told me to ask them if I did not understand anything and that, alone, made me feel smooth and welcome." (P3)

Typically, an international student will initiate to personally ask the help of the teachers for lessons that need clarifications. A teacher would usually give an extra hour after class to make sure that students understand the lesson. Foreign student respondents also identified that attending a reinforcement class program of the school specially organized for them to make sure that their need to learn is appropriately delivered by the teachers to help them understand the Filipino language.

"If I have to clarify something to understand a lesson, I refer to teachers personally. They say you can have an extra hour to stay in school so they can teach us". (P1)

"I would talk to them after classes and tell them that I did not understand or I would have a reinforcement class after school. They would always make sure that the students understand the lessons and make sure a hundred percent that we did not miss out on anything." (P2)

Expressing ideas and opinions in the classroom is essential for the respondents. It is their way to know that they are gradually adjusting to the new setting and feel ready to socially interact with their classmates and teachers. This approach helps them cope with the current situation freely without hesitation.

Thus, the respondents believe that talking to the whole class or class president is the best way to express themselves when they are bothered and needs to express their thoughts and perceptions on something that might be of help to them. One respondent expressed the need to convey his or her opinion to the class. It is essential to distinguish the role and contribution of the participant since it is significant to his or her adjustment process — such a statement documented from a participant's statement.

"I would express my ideas by talking to the president of the whole class. Telling them my opinion, on something I like, or dislike. I would make it known to everyone if something is bothering me, or I would give my opinion to make sure that I have a role in the class". (P2)

Effective communication plays a vital role when interacting with others. The respondents, in terms of communication, prefer to hear or communicate in a language generally spoken. It is essential to achieve a common goal in classroom activities and projects successfully.

Though respondents expressed their opinions by speaking personally and, or texting, it is still essential for them to communicate in English so that they can work together as a team. It observed in the students' statements:

"We interact in many ways during discussions, presentations, and lunchtime. We always interact by talking in and out of school and texting. There is always communication and interaction with my classmates". (P2)

"They always want to speak in Tagalog. Since I cannot understand it, I tell them to speak in English, so we can all work together as a team whenever there is an activity or project". (P3)

"We talk a lot, they always explain their points, and I do the same." (P4)

International students enrolled in Philippine School Doha are required to take the FSL, Filipino, as a Second Language program as an intervention so that they could learn the language quickly. The respondents' first encounter with the Filipino subject caused an interaction complication in the respondents' academic experience. It gives international students difficulty comprehending even the most straightforward topics because most of them were learning a foreign language.

"I did have some difficulty in understanding everything, even the small, easy things. It was hard for me to cope and put myself in the discussions." (P2)

One of the respondents has a difficulty learning the Filipino language during the ninth grade at first, but was now familiar and accustomed to it.

"My first experience in Filipino class was not in PSD, but during grade 9, it was a bit difficult because I was learning new words, but now in senior high, it is already customary for me." (P4)

Unfamiliar terminologies are the cause of difficulty in learning the subject. It is hard for one is learning a new language, and there is no sense of relevance for the future since the respondents are not Filipino. The international students felt no choice but to endure the struggles; if it may affect the student's grades, thus, causing the students pressure.

Additionally, this difficulty of not being able to apprehend channels the feeling of being left behind from others, as confirmed by one foreign student, "It is mostly not understanding because I go to Filipino classes, and I feel left out. It is tough because Filipino subject is not necessary for the future, but we still have to take it, and if we fail, that is a big mistake for, so that is one thing pressuring me". (P2)

One way of developing social engagement is learning one's peer's language. The foreign students of PSD learned the language with the help of school friends and FSL. Learning the casual Tagalog words came from peers, sometimes international students would ponder on randomly heard Tagalog words in class, the international students then will ask the meaning of the word from the student's classmates.

"I learn Filipino words through my Filipino friends." (P1)

"Filipino second language classes and for Tagalog words, I hear words from class, so I ask the meaning of the words, and they would help me." (P2)

"When my friends are speaking with each other, they teach me some good words when I am around them." (P3)

Participants of the study conveyed various impressions when they first transferred to Philippine School Doha. It shows in their responses the first interactions with other students, qualities they like and dislike about their classmates, and how they overcome these adjustment struggles as well as their ability to communicate effectively, and barriers that affected their communications. These are apparent to the respondents' following statement:

"My experiences during the few weeks of transferring to a Filipino school was rough, especially for a foreigner. My image, as well as reputation, was destroyed because of how people were judgmental, how people took me in the wrong way from my personality, and their opinion on my personality." (P2)

"It was really bad at first. I thought it was going to be cool, but later I got new friends then it was awesome. It was nice." (P3)

"I was completely new since I am a transferee, so I was not talking much. I thought they might call me to cringe at first, but now they are cool with me." (P1)

"My main concern was that there was plenty of homework and activity, so I felt overloaded." (P4)

Foreign senior students learned that the students in Philippine School Doha are easily approachable, and also interacting to their Filipino classmates undoubtedly made the foreign students adjust effortlessly to the new community and coordinate with the students, as the two respondents expressed by, "My first interaction was good, but it took them much time to understand me, but it was the same for me, too." (P1)

"They were welcoming and would always call me to join their galas and parties." (P4)

Every nationality has its customs, traits, characteristics, values, attitudes, and beliefs. They have the possessions of uniqueness as a nation. Until now, those traits are still alive, and most of them continuously transferring to the next generations. Some Filipino qualities they like and dislike, are how Filipinos are talented yet tend to be overactive.

Another international student also said that Filipinos are helpful and that the thing he/she dislike is how being left out whenever the students speak in Filipino. He/she will start having doubts when someone is talking about them.

"I love the way my classmates treat each other, talk about everything, and their talents. Sometimes, I do not like how they are so overactive." (P4)

"The qualities I like about Filipino classmates are always seeking help from you in different areas. For example, Arabic, always getting to know you more and helping you. For me, what I dislike the most is being left out again, and people talking around in Filipino makes me feel have doubts if someone was talking about me because it happened before." (P2)

A different matter that the international students had to deal with is overcoming experiences in order to be harmony with not just the Filipino students but the community in general. Respondents get over these experiences by just accepting it and open up to new things.

"Overcoming these experiences is hard, just go with the flow, and let it be, just accept it." (P2)

"I opened myself to new things, they gave me their best, and with that, the outcome was amazing." (P3)

Student's ability to communicate and interact with others is an essential skill to achieve. Ineffective communication and language barriers are some of the hardest things to deal with according to some respondents because this can lead to misunderstanding and affect mental consciousness.

"Sometimes it is hard because my classmates tend to say a word that they do not know the translation in English, but in other aspects, I did not find any problem because I am the person who finds for what I understand and believe." (P4)

"This barrier affected my mental consciousness." (P1)

"The misunderstanding, which is all I can say." (P3)

Lastly, foreign students overcome these difficulties in communicating and also students having their own techniques to the language barrier and according to the respondents stated, "Telling them to please accept the fact that we cannot talk in Filipino, and make them talk in English because they are not used to it and me being around." (P2).

"My main technique is that if you do not know the language, learn it like we never lose knowledge, and my classmates are always there for me when I do not understand some words or phrases." (P4)

In Conclusion, Socialization is a process essential for our development as human beings. Through socializing, we acquire a sense of self as well as emotions. It can often depend on the people you are with. Socializing is not easy; it takes up much time to enjoy being with other people. Also, people's ability to make friends or to become a part of a group fuels self-confidence, and it creates a better atmosphere among everyone.

B. Non-Academic Involvement

International students also indulge themselves in non-academic related experiences such as extracurricular, activities. Hobbies and interests are two main aspects that correlate with the participants' non-academic involvement. These two aspects categorized as Personal Skills. The majority in the students' response had No Effect or influence on how their hobbies and interests affect their choice in joining extracurricular activities. The authors also found that academics is a reason as to what prompted the international students to join these activities.

As a result, the Personal Academic Purpose concluded as one of the thought units. Advantages in engaging with different activities or sports developed Positive Skill among international students. On the contrary, disadvantages also considered to affect the participants' immersion to their said activities or sports, thus resulted in Social Interaction Struggle. Lastly, the students had Personalized Guidelines, which assisted time management in accomplishing their mentioned activities or sports. Seven thought units concluded under the theme of Non-Academic Involvement.

One international student mentioned hobbies and activities based on his/her self. The mentioned hobbies of international students are swimming, playing the guitar and piano, and singing. Also mentioned is the student's interest in performing inquiries dealing

with subjects that interest the respondents or finding out as to how things made to be. An appearance in the respondent's statement, "my hobbies and my interest are based on myself like swimming, playing the guitar, and piano, and singing. My interests are finding out how things are, having my little research about things I am interested in." (P2)

Reading books, listening to music, specifically a lot of Tagalog songs, and performing fitness activities are hobbies and interests that one respondent mentioned.

"I love reading books, listening to songs, more Tagalog songs, and having physical fitness activities." (P4)

The international students' hobbies and interests influenced their choice of joining extracurricular activities in terms of opportunities and or more natural options for the participants. The students' leisure gave opportunities for them to be able to join different activities and sustained these hobbies and interests while indulging in extracurricular activities as these hobbies and interests were practiced. As stated by a respondent:

"My reading influenced me more on choosing my strand, but my physical activities helped me in getting in this years' intramurals." (P4)

Personal benefits, particularly opportunities, are reasons that incited international students to join their mentioned activity or sport. An added grade or point in their academics is one justification that benefits students when they join an activity. Learning unfamiliar conditions, engaging in a different sport, and socializing with people are also considered reasons. It is evident in the respondents' statements:

"Teachers say it is graded, so I have to join." (P1)

"I am always up to learn new things, joining a different sport, and always getting to know people during these activities." (P2)

Additionally, one student had an opportunity to join a sport in Philippine School Doha and utilize his or her preferred hobbies, basketball, in playing thus, consequently fostered confidence to the student's well-being as mentioned by the respondent, "I used to play basketball, before enrolling to PSD, but this year I had the opportunity to play, and I felt more confident." (P4)

The advantages of immersing in these activities or sports are acquiring more information, and mostly getting mentally and physically fit. An added point which results in to increase in grade reports is also a cited advantage. Additionally, socializing in terms of communicating and interacting with other students is more apparent in the international students' response:

"If you join activities, your grade might increase, and you also get mentally fit." (P1)

"Advantages in joining these activities or sports are getting to know more information, making new friends, and communicating by being open to people." (P2)

"It is a nice way to socialize with others and have fun and do some physical fitness activities." (P3)

Although socializing was expressed as an advantage, international students find social interaction as a struggle. It is because some students do not recognize international students in joining different extracurricular activities.

Thus, the respondent finds difficulty in connecting with other students. It also correlates to an invariably mentioned disadvantage language barrier, which keeps students from socializing effectively and could affect relationship establishment among other students.

"The disadvantage is that some people will not accept the fact a foreigner is in these activities, or I would find a hard time getting to know other people and knowing the language; the language barrier between you and people during these activities or sports." (P2)

Frequently mentioned as a guideline in handling time during activities is time management. It is essential in being able to accomplish the said activities or sports of the students. The students would firstly finish school-related works then give time to these activities or sports. Maintaining this type of management aids to the students' less academic cramming. It is apparent in the participants' responses:

"Once I am done with the study schedule, I give my time to these activities." (P1)

"I manage my time by finishing all the work needed, and I would manage my time to finish these activities or sports. For example, after activities, it is another thing because it is after school work." (P2)

C. Ethnicity

It has always seen as a factor that helped bring people in a particular community together. This unique characteristic of being human also is a cause of diversity in people's culture; to foreign senior high school students, they learned that Filipino qualities are easily adaptable. It would help them to adjust to a Philippine School and Filipino community in general. Such acts are in the following students' responses:

"How you communicate greetings and manners taught in Filipino, and how you should act around adults, respecting in general." (P2)

"The way they talk or interact is very adaptive to me and their culture." (P1)

"Filipinos are kind and fun to be with." (P4)

"The culture, the food, I love the food. I am already used to it." (P3)

Also, some Filipino qualities are displeasing not all nationalities share the same culture, culture refers to a system of tradition that dictates the thought and even action of a given group of people in a society. Cultural adaptation processes through which individual undergoes in order to adjust to another culture different from his/her usual way of life. One participant stated, "Filipinos are competitive, sometimes, and it might result in something bad or unenjoyable." (P4)

Foreign students adjusting to a Philippine school would not be comfortable especially with different curriculum and communities some qualities that affected the students are both positive and negative said by the respondents: "It helped me get used to people and take school seriously while still aware of my limits." (P4)

"Adjusting to a non-Filipino school and the qualities, these affected me. Like having no interest and losing interest in the lessons and culture because I thought it was hard." (P2)

Last but not least, having friends from different cultures helps you accept people from different races and ethnicities for their uniqueness and shows how you practice beliefs from yours. The senior international students learned to cope up with gaining friends and be able to harmonize with their fellow Filipino classmates.

"I am always myself when I meet new people, so it was easy because, like if someone likes me, they would, and will like me for who I am." (P4)

"Most people around me would tell me that I should try to learn Filipino culture, and adjust to their qualities and Filipino people. It is just pressure on you. However, gaining new friends can also be a good effect because they are always there is to help you learn new qualities of a Filipino." (P4)

In Conclusion, growing up, we learned about culture and practices that are specific to us. People mostly learn about other cultures from interacting with people from various cultural practices. Several things in other people's cultures are different from ours, and it is not always that we agree with them. However, we learn to become more accommodating and accepting of others' differences.

IV. DISCUSSION

Philippine School Doha was established on October 3, 1992, and has been home to Overseas Filipino children. Its primary purpose is to serve and help students by providing quality education for all. For 27 years now, it has been serving the community with service and excellence as its objective. The school progressed in many ways that it finally opens its door to international students who are willing to learn and adapt to our language and culture. It has known that the school does not only honed globally competitive graduates but also provides learners the most exceptional quality education with the principle of being a pro-God, pro-environment, pro-people, and pronation individuals. These standards were being inculcated to the minds of all students regardless of nationalities and

The school tries to remove instability, provide predictable routines, and minimize emotionally difficult changes (Loveless, 2019). In a child's life, it plays a vital role, particularly in their attitudes towards school, anxieties, loneliness, social support, and academic motivation that help them adapt and participate in the school environment (Lakhani et al., 2017).

The study intended to shed light on the understanding of the journey of an international student as a transferee precisely wherein the setting is more diverse than their previous schools. One of the specific targets of this research is to find out how foreign senior high school students of Philippine School Doha adjust in terms of their academics, non-academic involvement, and ethnicity.

The researchers would like to know how foreign Senior High School students adjust in a Philippine school setting. It can add necessary information to the topic of acculturation within a Filipino host through the phenomenological approach that factors their journey of adaptation uncovered.

A. Academics

The Philippine School Doha is a community that provides excellent quality education for students, and that includes the newly transferred international students of the Senior High School Department. The school now welcomes international students and has helped them adjust as efficiently as possible so that they can be comfortable and feel the belongingness that Philippine School Doha offers. Academics are a part of a student, and by the time they reach higher education, there is a long list of assessments that define their success and that success measured by academic performance that a student must meet the standards that are being set out by the local government and the institution itself (Bell, 2018). Academic performances are by taking written and oral tests, performing presentations, doing homework, and participating in-class activities and discussions that teachers evaluate in the form of letter or

number grades and side notes, to describe how well a student has done (Robinson, 2016). In other perspectives, there are always problems that the school needs to solve in order to support and give out the educational needs of students. Every school faces a large portion of these issues that are not seen as significant internal changes until external issues are addressed and changed within the community (Meador, 2019).

The Latin word "*ad-justre*," gave rise to the word adjustment, is the process by which an individual balances barriers and necessities in their environment, as discussed by Mesidor and Sly (2016). The academic journey of an international student is one of the primary subject matters of this study, as academics have a significant influence on the international students' school life in Philippine School Doha, and it may be positive or negative. Academic exposure signifies positive results in different aspects of a student's future. Positive education defined as a blend of study of growing happiness and well-being along with long-established education concepts (Geher and Wedberg, 2019). All parents want their child to have the best educational needs that are essential to survive the future that awaits them.

As constructed by conscientious scientific research, to be able to live the desired life and thrive as individuals, to acquire the skills and understanding needed to have a successful educational and professional life, one needs to attain positive education (Adler, 2017). Positive education, based on the positive psychological principles, deals with the study of virtues and qualities that help people evolve positively, develop, and lead to a happy lifestyle (Emma Green, 2017).

In the case of international students, they attain positive education once they have adjusted to the school's established systems and standards. The questions grounded on how transferring to a new school affects their academic performance and how the international students cope with Filipino classes of the Filipino Second Language (FSL), short for Filipino as a second language program. Specific questions include advantages and disadvantages of transferring to a new school, coping with changes, interaction and communication with teachers and students, and lastly, experiences and difficulties in learning the Filipino language.

Positive outcomes, such as being exposed to the new curriculum, were apparent in the findings. Students face these academic challenges as they began their academic life in Philippine School Doha. On the positive side, an international student mentioned that the teachers insist on offering aid whenever the students feel the need. The international students found strategies to cope with the academic challenges they face in order to adjust to Philippine School Doha. Such coping mechanisms were naturally conforming or interacting with the Filipino students.

However, there were adverse outcomes such as difficulty in coping with new teaching styles and the language commonly spoken in school, which resulted in feeling left behind. According to Mesidor and Sly (2016), "Language barriers compound the problems experienced in this area (Smith and Khawaja, 2011) and often manifest in depression, loneliness, and isolation (Wei et al., 2007)." Participants mentioned that Filipino students and teachers spoke in their native tongue and intensified the experience of their difficulty in understanding and coping in terms of their academics.

B. Non-Academic Involvement

Philippine School Doha exposes every child to show their aptitudes that make them capable of thinking and apprehending the information they receive. The school believes that a child has a different mindset that makes them interested in their surroundings. International students experience extracurricular activities such as their hobbies and interests, which are the aspects that correspond with the participant's non-academic involvement.

To further understand their experiences, we made inquiries regarding their non-academic involvement. According to Psych Lens (2017), students tend to comply with various school requirements simultaneously that this burden alone is enough to make them unable to concentrate. Extracurricular activities are the events that students voluntarily join, like clubs, organizations, or sports, and find in all levels of the school (Hermano, 2016). The non-academic aspect correlated with the international student's experience in Philippine School Doha. Under this, we have included a theme named "Social Struggle." "Personality can focus on a variety of influences, ranging from genetic explanations for personality" (Cherry, 2019). International students' hobbies and interests influenced them in joining extracurricular activities in terms of natural options for the participants.

Language is one of the most delightful human limits that our species has, and one that engaged with all others, including cognizance, sociality, and culture. We utilize the typical arrangement of language to make meaning and speak with other individual people (Ortega, 2014). Adapting any new dialect is hard for a non-local speaker. It is truth be told, perhaps the hardest thing we request that grown-ups do. In a general sense, a language is a device that we use to convey to achieve undertakings (Voxy., 2017). Responses we have gotten include their difficulty comprehending or grasping the language because it has no relevance to their future, pressure, and how they might have accustomed already and have learned words and phrases through their peer's language. Several studies have acknowledged how learning a different language to adapt to the foreign environment is one of the acculturation

stressors. Acculturative stress has identified as resulting from and arising out of the act of moving to and living in a new culture, including somatic manifestations, depression, anxiety, and decreased self-esteem (Sullivan 2015). According to Sato et al. (2015), over the years, studies have revealed that many international students are often disappointed with their language progress while abroad. Perhaps with international students sharing a common language with a foreign host could cause them to struggle less socially.

According to Cole Nicki Lisa, Ph.D. (2019), Socialization is a procedure that acquaints individuals with social standards and customs. This procedure assists people with working great in the public arena, and, thus, assists society with running efficiently. Socializing to international students was expressed as an advantage, though social interaction is a struggle. A minority might face positive and negative experiences due to the differences they have. One may be the language barrier "it was found out that one major problem they encounter is the language barrier where students reported that they had language problems. Some students claimed that they were confident in their English but not in Filipino, where Filipino is the first language in the Philippines.

Nevertheless, most foreigners in higher years mixed in class with Filipino students — most of the announcements made in the local dialect or the first language. Consequently, foreigners have difficulty understanding and explaining their thoughts to their classmates, teachers, and others. It proves the claim of one foreign student that a small problem may seem small but may lead to a big problem – that could result in toil" (Maguddayao, 2018). It cannot establish a social connection within the school; meanwhile, another could establish friendships and have an understanding between the host cultures. The understudies felt that, in order to make scholastic progress, they had to assimilate linguistically and culturally to the predominant language and culture of their alumni programs. They likewise discussed challenges in building social associations with other students in their alumni programs, which made them feel awkward and reluctant to speak with these companions (Sato et al. 2015).

Being in a school means having to interact with others because of workgroups, projects, presentations, or even to gain friendships. A minority might face positive and negative experiences due to the differences they have. One may be misunderstood and cannot establish a social connection within a school; meanwhile, another could establish friendships and have an understanding between the host cultures.

C. Ethnicity

The school practices being equal to other cultural groups and respecting their beliefs to prevent the behavior of comparison. Also, the school made sure that international students would not feel alone – keeping them comfortable and welcomed in the Filipino community. It is the main priority of the school to attend the needs of their students. According to Maria Garcia (2015), educational institutions are encouraged to accept international students not only to foster global and cultural understanding but also to boost academic and economic exchange.

The exchange of diverse cultures makes our world desirable to know new knowledge. Culture is bringing people together as one. According to Wells, Fox, and Cordova-Cobo (2016), students can quickly learn how to navigate adulthood in an increasingly diverse society and giving them the knowledge of what a skill that employers value. However, there are some challenges that international students face when it comes to adjusting to the Filipino culture like substantial difficulties of the language barrier, curriculum overload, financial constraints, and assessment tasks that require a high proficiency in communication skills (Maguddayao, 2018).

In every part of the world, different cultures have their eccentric yet beautiful traditions that are also known as ethnicity. Ethnicity is a word used to describe cultural identities like language, religion, nationality, ancestry, dress, and customs that considered anthropological, for it based on learned behaviors (Pariona, 2017). It is the culture of the people in a given geographic region or people who descended from natives of that region and is a member of an ethnic group includes following some or all of those cultural practices (Nittle, 2019). However, it is also hard to adjust in such a different culture, and especially people are new to an unknown ethnicity.

The international students find our culture very pleasing in many ways yet disturbing in different aspects. First, Filipino people have a great way of pleasing our guests. One fact is that the Philippines filled with proficient English teachers as Filipinos perform well in English communication, both in written and verbal (Diego, 2017). According to Marino, Montalbo, and Bugtong (2017), learning and understanding international students about new views and perspectives towards life can be achieved while studying in another country, as mentioned by Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) as cited by Chen, S.H. (2009). Second, the first impression is our great specialty. According to Peter Economy (2019), the first impression is made within the first seven seconds after you meet someone new. Remember that the new place will give a new chance (Hartwell-Walker, 2018). By that chance, international students have a chance to express themselves differently.

Lastly, the Filipino community never forgets to have great respect for other people. International students noticed that Filipinos are very respectful when it comes to older adults or others.

According to Daniel Wong (2019), intelligent students are not that different from other students, they are just more disciplined and focused, and they have developed winning habits.

However, some international students have difficulty in adjusting in terms of native language and being competitive in the school. The native language is a part of the school's curriculum, for it is a Filipino school. Some international students find the lessons not engaging when the teachers are speaking the native language. However, the teachers make sure that they can catch up with the class, and they always remind them that they can approach them anytime if they need guidance and help with the lessons.

V. CONCLUSION

The school, in general, improved in providing excellent quality education to students. This advocacy has been a long practice in Philippine School Doha. They served not only the Filipino students but also international students and exceeds in providing foremost assistance to them. Regardless of their and nationalities, students were given the same acquisition of knowledge through providing excellent service and support needed, most notably to the newly transferred international students in the Senior High School Department.

Optimum quality education has given to international students for them to improve in ways, such as cultivating their innate skills in acquiring new knowledge, make them ready to be a cultured professional in the future, and leading them to achieve their goals and aspirations in life.

The school has been successful in providing balance quality learning to all international students who are currently and newly enrolled in the Senior High School Department. However, it was always a struggle for them to cope and adjust to the new environment, most notably about communication. The language barrier identified as one of the major issues of these students, and they do not only struggle academically but also having difficulty expressing their ideas and opinions to others. Over the years, the school genuinely embraced and provided international students with distinctive programs that could help them learn and achieved their goals in life regardless of religion, nationality, and culture group.

\Filipino as a Second language is a program created especially for international students wherein they taught to learn the essential Filipino words. It is essential and required for international students to attend this program so that they will be able to communicate well with others. Additionally, having this specialized programs help them develop their confidence in speaking and understanding Filipino speakers during class or group interactions.

The international students have developed different skills and improved in many qualities. It made them become a discipline in managing time in doing their school activities and focused on specific subjects to achieve their goals. Nevertheless, international students face difficulties in socializing with their classmates due to the language barrier. The Filipino language is the main difficulty of international students in terms of:

- A. Socializing to other students
- B. Approaching their classmates
- C. Asking help from the teachers

Also, the school diverted with different cultural groups that offer the school a great exchange of desirable new knowledge. It was a challenge for the school to widen its new knowledge and understanding of different traditions and beliefs. All do it is a vast topic to discuss; the international students did not have difficulty in adjusting to the Filipino culture, for it was almost the same with their tradition. The international students observed positive attributes that they find it interesting. For example, respecting the elders and being friendly to all.

In the first hand, Filipino people are very respectful, especially to elders. It has noticed not only one but almost all of the international students of the Senior High School Department. On the other hand, the Filipino community has a warm heart that we create a great relationship with other people.

In Conclusion, Philippine School Doha has created a great innovation to improve and help the students expand their understanding, develop new skills, and acquire a high quality of knowledge that can hopefully reach their success in life.

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