# OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH: UNLEASHING LIFE STORIES AND BREAKTHROUGHS

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## Abstract

The study focuses on the life stories and breakthroughs of the out-of-school youth (OSY). The researchers sought to answer the following questions: 1. What are the reasons for the emergence of out-of-school youth? 2. What challenges have the out-of-school youth encountered during attending school and after dropping out? 3. What coping mechanisms do out-of-school youth employ during attending school and after dropping out? 4. What model on the experiences of out-of-school youth can be developed?

This study was conducted at Barangay San Blas, Bangar, La Union, specifically Sector 1,2,3, and 4. There were ten (10) out-of-school youths as participants. Moreover, a researcher-made interview guide was utilized to gather the out-of-school youths' life stories and breakthroughs. The results on the reasons for the emergence of out-of-school youth were thematized into four: financial struggle, dealing with parental pressure, excessive mental and physical stress, and student-teacher relationship. The challenges faced by the out-of-school youth were categorized into during attending school and after dropping out from school. While attending school, they encountered challenges such as academic stress, negative student-teacher relationship, and an oppressive school environment; whereas, the difficulties encountered after dropping out were difficulty in finding work, frustration, and social judgment.

Meanwhile, coping mechanisms employed by the out-of-school youth were categorized into during attending school and after dropping out from school. The participants employ four coping mechanisms during attending school: engaging in leisure activities, getting family support, and having a positive outlook in life; while after they drop out, the out-of-school youth employ job hunting and decide to return to school as coping mechanisms. Based on the findings, the researchers came up with a model "Model on the Experiences of Out-of-School Youth" to best represent the life experiences of the out-of-school youth.
Keywords: *out-of-school youth, reasons, challenges, coping mechanisms*

## I.Introduction

Education serves as a catalyst for societal transformation, a fundamental pillar of progress, a source of national identity, a vehicle for advancement, and an enduring asset. It is universally acknowledged that every child, irrespective of socio-economic background, is entitled to an education, viewing it not as a privilege exclusive to a select few but rather as an inherent human entitlement.

According to the 1987 Philippine Constitution, Article XIV Section 1, the State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to

make such education accessible to all. In addition, Section 2 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution says that the state shall establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and society; establish and maintain a system of scholarship grants, student loan programs, subsidies, and other incentives which shall be available to deserving students in both public and private schools, especially to the under-privileged.

Despite the transformative potential of education and many opportunities given to the youth and people, a significant portion of the global youth population continues to be deprived of access to quality educational opportunities due to various socio-economic constraints such as poverty, discrimination, familial conflicts, and personal adversities. This unfortunate circumstance manifests in the phenomenon commonly referred to as "out-of-school youth" (OSY). The term OSY delineates individuals aged 15 to 24 who are neither enrolled in educational institutions nor engaged in gainful employment, as defined by the Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey of 2015. Moreover, the Senate of the Philippines in 2021 extended the age range to encompass individuals up to 30 years old, who similarly lack educational or occupational engagement. The Philippine Statistics Authority, in 2001, further specified OSY as encompassing individuals aged 17 to 24 who are not enrolled in educational pursuits, unemployed, and devoid of college or post-secondary qualifications.

Numerous challenges confront out-of-school youth (OSY) as they endeavor to reintegrate into educational settings and pursue their academic aspirations. These impediments encompass deficiencies in education, assuming the roles of young parents or caregivers, encountering logistical constraints such as limited access to transportation, and facing housing instability. Such obstacles act as deterrents preventing out-of-school youth from reengaging in formal schooling, vocational training initiatives, and employment opportunities, as delineated by Corcoran et al. (2012).

Kwandrans (2020) stated that the prevalence of OSY in the United States exhibited a notable increase from the 2008 recession, with figures reaching 12.6%. In 2018, the absolute count of OSY individuals in the United States amounted to 4.4 million, constituting approximately 11.2% of the young adult population aged 16 to 24. Notably, the peak of OSY prevalence occurred in 2010, registering at 14.7%. Despite a subsequent reduction of 1.3 million OSY individuals, the reintegration process is often hindered by persistent barriers such as the absence of a high school diploma and the responsibilities associated with caregiving and parenthood.

Moreover, within the Sub-Saharan Africa region, an estimated 89 million youths aged between 12 and 24 are not enrolled in educational institutions, marking it as the region with the highest incidence of out-of-school youth (OSY). The profound impact of instability on school attendance is underscored by the observation that nearly one-third of adolescents not engaged in formal education reside in areas affected by conflict. Gender disparities are notably pronounced, with girls being disproportionately affected, reflecting their heightened vulnerability to factors contributing to educational underachievement, including poverty, political turmoil, lack of accessible infrastructure, and limited economic prospects tied to education. Notably, these gender differentials are most pronounced in tertiary education and tend to amplify with educational progression. Moreover, there has been a stagnation in growth over the past decade, posing significant ramifications for individuals opting out of educational pursuits, as noted by USAID (n.d.).

In the Philippines setting, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) (2015) defined out-of-school youth as the individuals aged between 15 and 24 who are neither engaged in employment nor have completed any educational program nor are currently enrolled in school. The Philippine government has exhibited mounting concern regarding the escalating number of youths disengaged from formal education. Despite concerted governmental efforts to bolster educational infrastructure and support student needs, the annual dropout rate in the Philippines continues to rise. Various governmental endeavors, including the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) alongside educational aid initiatives, have been introduced to ameliorate this issue.

Despite these concerted initiatives, data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (2023) reveals that 18.6% of children aged 5 to 24 years old remain unenrolled in educational institutions. Although

enrollment rates at high school and college levels show promise, a considerable proportion of students fail to complete their education, with many dropping out within a span of fewer than three years.

Vito et al. (2018) delineated various factors contributing to the prevalence of out-of-school youth. These factors encompass early marriage or unions, inadequate family income, defined as the disparity between the total cost of education and the tuition fees borne by families, and a waning interest in pursuing further education, often resulting in academic underperformance and eventual dropout. Additionally, community-related variables, such as residence in rural areas, may exacerbate the situation as local inhabitants may lack awareness regarding governmental assistance, particularly pertaining to free tertiary education initiatives.

Dropout rates are further compounded by geographical factors, particularly in remote, isolated communities, compounded by adult family members' unemployment and residency in economically deprived urban locales. Long distances from educational institutions also contribute to dropout rates, especially among disadvantaged males who face challenges commuting to middle and high schools located far from their villages, as well as young females who lack the means to afford transportation for lengthy journeys (Mughal & Aldridge, 2017). Moreover, heightened awareness regarding malnutrition serves as another contributing factor to absenteeism and dropout rates, as it predisposes children to academic underperformance and impedes both their cognitive and physical development (Bhutta et al., 2017).

Furthermore, Aspiras and Aspiras (2021) expound on the escalating incidence of school dropout, attributing it to various factors such as familial financial obligations, disinterest in academic pursuits, early pregnancies, financial constraints, disability, or illness. Conversely, youth dropout rates predominantly stem from school-related issues, including racial and ethnic discrimination, school avoidance, instances of violence within educational settings, conflicts between students and educators, negative teacher attitudes, academic struggles, diminished motivation, subpar teaching standards, a dearth of emotional support and learning opportunities, and a deficit in positive student-teacher relationships.

Dr. Jose Rizal attributed education to elevating the nation to its zenith and shaping the mindset of its populace. "Ang kabataan ang pag-asa ng bayan" (The youth is the hope of the nation),  one of the immortalized lines of Dr. Jose Rizal from the 1879 Spanish poem "To the Filipino Youth" underscores the pivotal role of young people in shaping the future and contributing to the advancement of society. This emphasizes the indispensable nature of youth as the backbone of any nation, entrusted with significant responsibilities to steer the course of progress. To realize optimal national development, it is imperative that the youth are equipped with the necessary skills and training to fulfill their roles effectively.

The emergence of out-of-school youth (OSY) has become a focal point of research, yet a literature gap persists, particularly regarding studies conducted among youth residing in close proximity to educational institutions, particularly within the local and Philippine contexts. Hence, this study aims to address this gap.

The study aimed to determine the life stories and breakthroughs of the out-of-school youth  (OSY) who are near the vicinity of the school in San Blas, Bangar, La Union. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: 1. What are the reasons for the emergence of out-of-school youth? 2. What challenges have the out-of-school youth encountered while attending school and after dropping out? 3. What coping mechanisms do out-of-school youth employ while attending school and after dropping out? 4. What model on the experiences of out-of-school youth can be developed?

## II.  Literature

The review of related literature involves the systematic identification of location and analysis of documents containing information that are relevant and significant to the research.

**Emergence of Out-of-School-Youth**

Education is the most powerful weapon that a person can use to change life, but not all are given a chance to attend a formal schooling. Different factors can impede one in going to school such as poverty, sickness and mental and spiritual considerations. Vayachuta et. al. (2016) revealed that low quality of life, likelihood to be engaged in illegal and risky activities, and lack of life and social skills are the causes of the emergence of OSY. Philippine News Agency (2021) concluded that 9 percent or 3.53 million of the estimated 39.2 Filipinos aged 6-24 years old were considered out-of-school youth. In Manila, Senator Edgardo "Sonny" Angara talked about the increasing number of out-of-school youth in the Philippines because of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on education. In the 2021 data of the Department of Education there are close to 4 million students who are not able to enroll for this year.

Meanwhile, the reason behind dropping out that leads to being out-of-school youth are lack of interest, laziness due to no regular transportation from their house to the school that they need to walk kilometers every day, overlapping of school projects and requirements and lack of parent's support, lack of financial support or poverty, work to have their own money and have failed subjects (Mahinay, 2019).

Indisputably, the problem of school dropout remains a critical matter in the academe. The emergence of the out-of-school youth is rooted from these reasons by the Philippines Out of School Youth Ecosystem; these include financial challenges led by the changing business environment, family matters such as early pregnancy among female youth, and lack of personal interest to study with a higher motivation to pursue a job.

The Philippine Statistic Authority (2015) showed a data for the emergence of out-of-school youth in the Philippines where nearly 4 million out of school youth children and youth have entered into union or marriage, they also mentioned that insufficient family income to send child to school as the reason for not attending school which refers to all the educational expenses other than tuition fee and lack of interest in attending school.

Bianco et al. (2016) revealed that students disengage from schooling due to various reasons, including forced cessation of education and the pursuit of employment while attempting to balance work and education simultaneously. While some manage to succeed in this endeavor, others encounter difficulties and ultimately fail. Another study identified four primary challenges faced by respondents, leading to their discontinuation of schooling: struggles for survival, socio-environmental pressures, experiences of bullying, and feelings of isolation and academic inadequacy (Aspiras & Aspiras, 2021).

Meanwhile, Vito et al. (2018) suggested that out-of-school youth (OSY) aged 15 to 30 encounter five factors prompting their discontinuation of schooling, such as lack of awareness regarding free tuition, parental financial constraints, difficulty passing entrance exams, disinterest in attending school, and early marriage. Notably, financial constraints emerge as the most significant influencing factor among the selected respondents.

Evidently, numerous students continue to drop out of school due to various factors, leading to potential unemployment and socio economic challenges. As highlighted by Niones et al. (2018), OSY represents a vulnerable demographic with multifaceted needs, predisposing them to precarious employment prospects and an uncertain future.

**Challenges Encountered by Out-of-school Youth After attending School**

Out-of-school youth encounter multifaceted challenges post-disengagement from formal education, profoundly impacting their future trajectories. As per recent findings by the World Bank (2021), a primary hurdle for this demographic is the dearth of employment opportunities and limited earning potential. Lacking requisite educational credentials, particularly a high school diploma, these individuals confront difficulties in securing stable and remunerative employment, resulting in financial instability and reliance on social welfare provisions.

Out-of-school youth grapple with a lack of access to crucial services and support networks, compounding their predicaments. Originating predominantly from low-income backgrounds, they often confront barriers to healthcare, mental health assistance, and other essential resources, exacerbating

preexisting health concerns and impeding their ability to navigate the stressors associated with their circumstances.

Moreover, societal stigma and discrimination pose significant hurdles for out-of-school youth, further exacerbating their challenges. Bereft of formal educational qualifications, these individuals confront prejudicial attitudes and perceptions, potentially fostering negative stereotypes and social marginalization. This detrimentally affects their self-esteem and confidence, hampering their prospects for reintegration into the educational system or labor market (World Bank, 2021).

Kemple (2014) highlighted that the absence of formal education and skills training poses a significant obstacle for out-of-school youth, limiting their employment opportunities and career advancement prospects. The struggle of out-of-school youth in accessing decent job opportunities often lead them to precarious and low-paying employment situations that perpetuate their cycle of poverty (Finn, 2012). The social stigma and discrimination faced by out-of-school youth impacts their mental well-being and hinder their reintegration into education or the workforce (Rumberger, 2011). The absence of strong support networks, such as mentors or counselors, leaves out-of-school youth feeling isolated and uncertain about their future paths (Christle et al., 2007). The heightened risk of out-of-school youth that engage in delinquent behaviours and criminal activities due to the lack of structure and supervision in their lives (Tyler et al., 2014).

## Coping Mechanisms Employed by Out-of-school Youth

Students commonly encounter a plethora of challenges across different facets of their lives, as noted by Mazo (2015). These difficulties pervade various domains, including home life, social interactions, and academic settings, constituting an inherent aspect of the student experience. Indeed, the prevalence of daily struggles among students stems from diverse factors, with the nature and intensity of these challenges varying from individual to individual, transcending socioeconomic status or intellectual prowess. Regardless of their background, every student is susceptible to encountering frustrations, setbacks, losses, transitions, and conflicts.

Coping strategies, or mechanisms, denote the methodologies employed to navigate stressful circumstances effectively. As delineated by Lazarus and Folkman (2005), coping encompasses a dynamic interplay of cognitive and behavioral endeavors aimed at managing perceived stressors, whether originating internally or externally. This conceptualization underscores coping as a conscious and deliberate response distinct from the subconscious adaptive mechanisms termed 'defense mechanisms,' with both mechanisms serving to alleviate or endure stress.

Guevarra and Cimanes (2017) said that it is important for students to develop different coping strategies in order to encounter and manage stressful conditions. If not handled well, the stressors that originated from financial problems, sleep deprivation, societal activities and many more can affect a student's ability to perform.

Coping is generally categorized into four major categories. Problem-focused addresses the problem causing the distress which includes active coping, planning, restraint coping, and suppression of competing activities. On the other hand, emotion-focused aims to reduce the negative emotions associated with the problem such as positive reframing, acceptance, turning to religion, and humor. Meanwhile, meaning-focused uses cognitive strategies to derive and manage the meaning of the situation. Additionally, those who used cognitive reappraisal, turning to family, and social and athletic diversions were more likely to experience high life satisfaction, while those relying on creative diversions, reduced effort on schoolwork, handling problems alone, and deterioration were less likely to have high life satisfaction.

Further, social coping (support-seeking) refers to which an individual reduces stress by seeking emotional or instrumental support from their community. Kwaah and Essilfie (2017) disclosed that students used multiple strategies, mainly praying/meditating, self-distracting activities such as watching TV and listening to music to cope with stress. Other important stress coping strategies were emotional and instrumental support from family, friends and lecturers.

Also, Hearon (2015) showed that the students who employed time and task management, sleep, and deterioration to cope were more likely to experience higher academic achievement, while those who

coped by seeking academic support, skipping school, engaging in social and creative diversions, using substances, reducing effort on schoolwork, and handling problems alone were less likely to be academically successful.

## III.  Research Methods

### Research Design

The researchers utilized phenomenological qualitative research design, specifically hermeneutic phenomenology, to unleash the life stories and breakthroughs of the OSY in San Blas, Bangar, La Union, specifically Sectors 1, 2, 3, and 4.  Furster (2019) defines hermeneutic phenomenology as description of personal experiences, conversational interview, and close observation. Further, it focuses on the lived experiences of the participants.

Fernandez, et al., (2022), stated that qualitative research will be employed to investigate the fundamental questions of social phenomena in natural settings. These phenomena include people's perception of many aspects of their lives, their attitudes and behaviors, and the ways in which their interactions with others help to form social bonds.

Meanwhile, Mckoy (2023) stated that phenomenological study design includes systematic steps in data analysis procedures, including identifying a phenomenon to study, interviewing participants, highlighting common themes, and publishing work. The research design should work to bracket themselves off from the study to not insert any bias into the interpretation of results or interactions with participants.

### Selection and Study Site/ Sources of Data

The following selection and sources of data of this study involved the following parameters to make this study different from other studies in the field and to find its rightful place in the broad area of educational research, as well as its input in the reservoir of knowledge.

This study focused on the struggles encountered by the OSY and the mechanisms they employed in coping with these struggles. It was conducted at San Blas, Bangar, La Union, specifically, Sectors 1, 2, 3, and 4. The participants of this study were 10 OSY residing at San Blas, Bangar, La Union, who were purposely chosen by the researchers based on the following criteria: (a) OSY between ages 15 to 24, (b) high school dropouts, and (c) residing near the school.

### Research Instrument

The researchers utilized a researcher-made interview questionnaire and an aide memoire. Moreover, the interview guide was checked and validated by their research adviser.

### Data Collection Procedure

In order to achieve and gather the intended outcomes of this study, the researchers employed semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions and follow-up questions. Specifically, the interview was done face-to-face. This helped the researchers to collect data regarding the life stories and breakthroughs of the OSY. Interview is a process of collecting in-depth information on people's opinions, thoughts, experiences, and feelings (Easwaramoorthy & Zarinpoush, 2016). Before the researchers conducted the study, they informed and coordinated first to the barangay officials of San Blas, Bangar, La Union, especially the barangay captain. A letter was given in order to seek approval. The researchers asked the participants and considered their availability for the interview process, and gave a consent letter indicating the approval of being interviewed and the confidentiality of all the information they have given which were only used for research purposes. All the participants' responses were saved and transcribed.

### Mode of Analysis

Following the interview, the data underwent cool and warm analysis. Fernandez et. al (2022) outlined the process wherein interview results were transcribed and subsequently analyzed through cool and warm analysis techniques. The cool analysis phase involved identifying significant statements or verbalizations from each participant, forming the basis for the warm analysis stage, which delineated data categories and established themes. Following data coding, classification and analysis were

undertaken to discern themes. The themes were derived from the key issues extracted from the collected codes.

**Ethical Considerations**

Various ethical factors were considered by the researchers when they conducted the study. The barangay captain signed a communication letter that the researchers had produced and returned to show his consent. The participants were aware of their ability to withdraw and that their participation was entirely voluntary. Participants may opt out at any time or refuse to answer any or all of the questions. The participants were informed of the potential risks and advantages of this study. The privacy of the participant's information is another factor the researchers considered. In addition, Courtney (2023) defined confidentiality as the preservation of the data that study participants disclose. When analyzing the study's findings and outcomes, the researchers will exercise confidentiality.

More significantly, the researchers ensured that the respondents were treated fairly and equally at all times during the study. Treating respondents fairly entails providing them with equitable access to study-related opportunities, resources, and advantages. The data gathered was accessible to study participants (Courtney, 2023).

## IV.  Results and Findings

This chapter presents the findings, discussion, and conclusions of the data gathered in this study specifically on the life stories and breakthroughs of the OSY.

**Reasons for the Emergence of Out-of-School Youth**

One of the prevalent issues that the academy faces is the continuous increase of dropout rates. Many students enroll in school, however many of them cannot finish their education due to various reasons. This phenomenon continues to happen in the country despite the actions implemented by the government to combat the issue.

The first research question of the study was to identify the reasons for the emergence of OSY. As a result, the respondents' feelings, thoughts, and voices regarding the topic were discussed and analyzed. From these, different reasons for the emergence of OSY were identified.

**Financial Struggle**

Financial problems faced by underprivileged and low-income families have an impact on a student's academic performance. Students who experience lack of financial support hinder their ability to perform academically, the worst drop out from school.

The participant below (P1) shared his reason for dropping out by saying that he lacks financial support from his family. He said:

> *Awan iti mangpabasa Ma'am. (P1) No financial support from family.*

This was supported by Mishra and Azeez (2014) who claimed that socioeconomic status of the family is another factor which influences school dropout. Policies and programs have been implemented to prevent the increase of dropout rate; however, students are compelled to support household work because the family's economic status is not good.

Likewise, P2 and P9 shared the same experiences, expressing their current lack of earnings to sustain their educational pursuits. Additionally, P2 disclosed her ongoing employment efforts to fund her enrollment for the upcoming year. They articulated:

> *Awan pay urnong ate nga pang support…. Financial, tatta agur urnong ak pay ta*
> *daytoy nga tawen agbasa nak ulit. (P2) There are no earnings yet to support my*
> *studies. I am working to earn for my next enrolment.)*
> *Narigat ti biag, awan pagadal sunga nagsardengak manong. (P9) Life is difficult,*
> *and there is not enough money to support my studies.*

Long and Noor (2023) stated that students dropout from school because they are busy working due to lack of finances. In order to overcome financial problems, students opt to apply for work part-time.  Moreover, it was concluded that their employment status affects student dropout. Students who

are employed and work longer hours have less time to study. Financially stressed students are likely to drop out from school and less likely to graduate (Bennett, 2015).

In another case, P7 shared her reasons which are the difficulties in life and due to poor internet connection. She stated:

> *Wen ate kasi iti kinarigat iti biag ate. Nag-stop nak ate ta marigatan nak ti online*
> *class gapo ti signal. (P7) Yes, Ma'am because of the difficulties in life. I stopped*
> *because I cannot attend online class due to poor internet connection.*

Accessibility to the internet during the pandemic has jeopardized the quality of education for students and teachers since most classes were conducted online. Poor internet connectivity affects the student's learning. Technological challenges such as access to internet connectivity can impact student and teacher engagement with online education. Students who do not access the internet harm student's academic performance and often lead to drop out (Clarin & Baluyos, 2022).

The statements of participants 1,2,7 and 9 imply that financial problems can hinder the student's ability to succeed academically, highlighting the need to overcome this problem. In order to overcome these problems regarding the financial needs, students opt to juggle between jobs and academics, which in turn divides their focus and attention between work and academics that leads to dropping out from school.

**Dealing with Parental Pressure**

Parental pressure is where parents drive their children to do well in many aspects, particularly in the academic field. If the parent's attitude towards their children is positive, it can boost and improve the student's academic achievement. On the other hand, if the parent's attitude is negative, the student will more likely feel discouraged (Moneva & Moncada, 2020).

The participant 6 responded that she was pressured by her parents and felt compared to other people. She remarked:

> *Marigatan nak po ken, ma prepressure nak iti parents ko. Kasla icomcompare dak*
> *ti sabali nga tao kasjay. (P6) I was pressured by my parents. I feel like I was being*
> *compared to others.*

Parental pressure can have both positive and negative effects on a student's academic performance. Supportive parenting styles have been found to improve academic achievement. However, authoritarian parenting styles, which place high expectations on academic achievement, can lead to stress and negatively impact academic performance[1]. In the Philippines, a study found that authoritarian mothering practices were detrimental to the health and well-being of top-performing students, causing psycho-emotional distress and exhaustion (Abildaeva 2022).

In another instance, P8 shared his reasons by saying that he quitted school because he wanted to help his family. He shared:

> *Hannak mapmapan gamin ket kayat ko tumulong iti pamilyak isu dediay gapo na*
> *ta nagsardengak nageskwela…(P8) I dropped out because I want to help my*
> *family.*

This was supported by Mishra and Azeez (2014) who claimed that even students opt to quit school because they need support for the household's work, engaging in any other earnings or taking care of younger siblings. Several situations occur where adolescent children of the family are looked upon as helping hand to the family. Students have no other choice to drop out from school and focus their attention on the family crisis.

From the responses of participants 6 and 8, it can be drawn that familial factors have influence in child schooling. Many students quit school due to excessive pressure they receive from their parents which often leads to anxiety and stress. Parents have high expectations from their children and they never consider their abilities and interests. There are some instances that students choose to quit school in order to support their family, either in household chores or taking care of younger siblings (Moneva & Moncada, 2020).

**Excessive Mental and Physical Stress**

Mental stress has been connected to lower academic performance and poor study progress; it predicted delay in academic success often leads to dropping out from school. On the other hand, low self-esteem also affects the motivation and confidence of the students causing them to be shy to enter school and unmotivated to continue their studies. Physical health is also a factor in dropping out of school, particularly the tiring work in handling business (Grotan, et. al, 2019).

The participant below (P3) said that he dropped out due to the lack of time and busy management of their family business. He said:

> *Lack of time ken busy gamin agbanbantayak iti store ken junkshop, Ate. (P3) Lack of time because I was busy because I was managing our business.*

Rubio et. al (2021) pointed out that the most common reasons for dropping out are mainly lack of time and tiredness. Despite these reasons, students choose to manage a business because they believe that they can have opportunities in building networks.

In another instance, participants 4 and 10 shared that they quit school due to shyness since he missed a lot of activities. They shared:

> *Mabainak gaminen ma'am ta ado iti missing activities kon.* (*P4) I was too shy to go to school because I missed a lot of activities.*

On the other hand P10 said that, *Naamwak gamin nga nabuntisak ket mabainakon nga sumrek. (P10) I found out I was pregnant, and I was too shy to attend school.*

As Chen et al. (2018) stated, shyness may negatively affect one's cognition, emotion and behavioral performance which leads to low academic performance and dropout. Highly shy students tend to restrict themselves to effectively communicate with others which inhibits them to seek help from others when encountering academic difficulties. On the other hand, teenagers who become more likely to drop out of school and teenagers who drop out of school are more likely to become pregnant. The impact of early teenage pregnancy on academic performance increases dropout because of pregnancy related issues and negative feelings on schooling (Maemeko, 2018).

Meanwhile, P5 and P9 stated that they lacked motivation and felt alone inside the school. P5 says,

> *Ahh wen naawanan ti ganas ken jay kasla "awan ti ngay kakampik idjay loob ti school" ... (P5) Lack of motivation and I felt alone inside the school.* Similarly, P9
>
> shared laziness as his reason for dropping out from school. He said: *Masadutak nga agbasa. (P9) I was too lazy to study.*

Loneliness affects the students' well-being, causing lower levels of motivation and withdrawal from social interactions. It occurs due to lack of social relationships, which causes negative emotional stress and impedes learning performance. In addition, loneliness negatively affects a student's mental health, which in turn causes decline in academic performance (Yang & Swekwi, 2021). Conversely, motivation is a very important factor in education, not only in maintaining sustainability of education but also relating to all aspects of education (Sumardi, 2020).

From the study of Permatasari (2023), it was found that laziness is a factor in dropping out. Laziness is related to lack of interest and motive factors which is an internal factor. Students who lack motivation are more likely to procrastinate and put off assignments until the last minute, which in turn results in poor academic performance. Failing school due to laziness can cause drop out.

In the response of P4, he said that he suffered from an accident, so he needed time to recover. He attested:

> *Ma'am....nadisgrasya ak gamin idi, nagpalaing ak Ma'am.* (*P4) I had an accident before so I need time to recover, Ma'am.*

Tierens et al. (2011) stated that children who suffered from motor vehicle accidents may suffer trauma symptoms such as depression and anxiety which affects their mental health and well-being.

The statements of respondents 3,4,5,9 and 10 can be drawn that poor mental and physical health is associated with dropout among high school learners. Student's mental health has adverse impact on their capabilities and motivation. Mental and physical problems can result in low self-esteem,

diminished motivation, and withdrawal from social situations. Withdrawal from social situations may deter the students' interaction with peers, teachers, and administrators (Zubrick et al., 2023).

**Student-Teacher Relationship**

Student-teacher relationship plays a significant role in every student's learning process. Positive teacher-student relationship makes students feel safe and supported, and they are more likely to engage in learning. However, there are only a few people who realize that a positive student-teacher relationship cultivates students' abilities. When students feel that they established a positive relationship with their teacher, they show up to class on time, express their opinions, enjoy learning activities, and participate in group discussions. On the contrary, when the teacher establishes a chaotic and disorderly teaching environment and is strict in words and deeds, students lose their interest in the class (Dai, 2024).

In the situation of P5, his mother shared that the child feels unwelcome and he cuts classes to avoid the teacher. She shared:

> *Dediay gamin Ma'am mahilig iti trouble… Adda diay teacher nga haan na kayat…adda diay teacher nga feeling na haan isuna welcome…nu tay agisuro diay teacher, leave'ban na…kahit nandoon siya sa loob ng school, present siya sa ibang subject, pero absent talaga siya sa iba…* (*P5) He engages himself in trouble. There's a subject teacher that makes him feel unwelcome. He will cut classes if the teacher enters the classroom, but he is present in his other subjects.*

This was supported by Academic Mediation Theory which states that youthful individuals needed to learn but were prevented by uncertain bullying, poorly managed behavior and having to ponder subjects they did not enjoy (Battin-Pearson, 2000). On the other hand, when the relationship between classmates is not all positive and spiritual companionship is ignored by the teacher, there is a high possibility that the student-teacher relationship will become negative. The negative student-teacher relationships and students' depressed experiences causes a negative increase in the promotion of students' academic goals. Moreover, negative student-teacher relationships, communication between them is reduced or disappear (Dai, 2024).

The statement of the above-mentioned participant above implies that the student-teacher relationship impacts the student's learning process. A positive student-teacher relationship motivates the students to excel inside the classroom, whereas the negative student-teacher relationship demotivates the learners to strive which in turn may lead to dropout.

**The Challenges Faced by the Out-of-School Youth**

Out-of-school youth (OSY) encounter a plethora of challenges that are typically uncommon for individuals of their age. These adversities can impede their pursuit of personal aspirations, thereby limiting their capacity for both learning and employment (Polk & Kitching, 2016).

Whether during their schooling or after dropping out, OSY grapple with a multitude of burdens that impact their lives significantly. Some contend with difficulties securing employment, while others face bullying and judgment from their peers, leading to feelings of frustration and disillusionment. When queried about the challenges they confront, participants candidly shared their experiences, both during their time in school and after discontinuing their education.

**Challenges Faced by Out-of-School Youth during Attending School**

Challenges are the obstacles, difficulties or adversities that the students encountered during attending school. Challenges might make one a determined person but some who have a low self-determination will end up giving-up. In the case of the challenges faced by the OSY during attending school, they treat those as justifications to quit school.

**Academic Stress**

Academic stress is one of the challenges faced by the OSY during attending school and it can reduce motivation, hinder academic achievement, and can lead one to drop out from school (Pascoe et al., 2020).

The first participant started sharing the challenges that he faced during attending school by saying that he is a little bit stressed of the activities he has. He said:

*Sakto lang diay stress ko, ma'am. (P1) Yes, I was a little bit stressed.*

*Wen ate. Nastressak. (P3) Yes, I was stressed.*

*Additionally, participant 9 said that; Wen Manong, nastress nak ti acads*

*(P9) Yes, I was stressed with my academics.*

Academic stress is the most dominant stress factor that students face while attending school. It is one of the biggest causes of stress, anxiety and depression among students. It is very common and it can become quite overwhelming at times (Monsah, 2022).

Similarly, (P4) shared the same response to them saying that he was recovering from his injury due to an accident and he cannot comprehend in answering the module. He responded:

*Nagpalaingak gamin dagidiay injuries ko. Adda met module a inted iti teachers*

*Ma'am ngem dajay ngarud ahm jak maawatan ken ah awan pagpatulungak…(P4)*

*I was recovering from my injuries due to accident. There were modules given by*

*my teachers, but I cannot comprehend and I don't have someone to ask for help.*

Also, P6 shared that she was a bit stressed because of wanting herself to become an honor student. She stated:

*Medyo, kasi para honor kuma. (P6) I was stressed a bit because I wanted to become an honor student.*

In line with this, P7 stated that he was stressed because she was working while attending her online class. He said:

*Na-stressak met ate kasi agsabay ti work ko ken online ate. (P7) I was stressed because I was working while attending my online class.*

Endsleigh (2015) supported this claim where he emphasized that understudies are now working part-time to help them in their financial needs in school. Students feel exhausted in balancing their time in their social life, family, work, and most especially their studies (Mitchell, 2016).

Meanwhile, P8 remarked that he was lazy in attending school. He responded:

*Masadsadutak nga sumrek. (P8) I was too lazy to go to school.*

Parreno (2022) supported this claim that one of the causes of dropping out from school is the lack of personal interest.

Prior to these responses, participants 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9 experienced academic stress during attending school; they find hard time to go with the pace of others and they are being left behind to study with others which results in some getting stressed inside the school. Particularly, the challenges stem from the complexity of the modules provided, difficulties in understanding activities, pressure to excel academically, and the demanding nature of online learning. As noted by the JED Foundation (nd), stress may appear to be a common experience, leading to its dismissal. However, numerous studies indicate that overwhelming school-related stress diminishes motivation, hampers academic performance, and heightens the likelihood of dropping out. Moreover, stress can precipitate health issues including depression, sleep disturbances, substance misuse, and anxiety.

**Negative Student-Teacher Relationship**

Agyekum, 2019 cited that teachers are said to be the second parent of the students, they play an important role to the life of the student physically, spiritually, emotionally and mentally. They have substantial impacts on their students' academic and life-long success. Teacher-student relationship is one of the factors that promote students' learning. A positive interaction with the students creates a peaceful environment, but negative interaction with the students leads to instability.

From P5, he stated that he cuts classes because he does not like the teacher and the student feels unwelcome. He stated:

*Adda diay teacher nga haan na kayat…adda diay teacher nga feeling na haan isuna welcome…nu tay agisuro diay teacher, leave'ban na kahit nandoon siya sa loob ng school, present siya sa ibang subject pero absent talaga siya sa iba…(P5)*

*He cuts classes because he does not like the teacher and feels unwelcome, but he enters his other subject.*

To support this claim, Agyekum (2019) stated that negative behavior affects both teachers and students. A deviant student stands the risk of expulsion if the student's action destabilizes the school, teachers and students.

The statement of the above-mentioned respondent implied that he does not like a teacher for some time and this challenge might make the student unable to study well. Meanwhile, Krane et al. (2017) postulated that students who disrespect authority may be sanctioned, expelled or changed. Positive teacher-student relationship leads to lasting peace, but a negative relationship thus creates a hostile environment for both teachers and students.

## Oppressive school environment

Bullying is a prevalent form of youth violence particularly in school settings that may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social or educational harm. This can lead to fear of school, absenteeism and stunted academic progress which in turn are precursors to dropping out of school (June & Urbanski, 2019).

P10 started sharing her challenges during attending school. She responded:

*Ichismis da nga masikogak Ma'am, nagadu ti maibagbaga da kanyak nga madi isu nga agsardengak lattan ta mas makafocusak didiay baby'k. (P10) They spread gossip about me so I decided to drop out to focus on my baby.*

Teenage pregnancy is considered outside factors for school disengagement among secondary school students in Latin America. Teenage pregnancy and early motherhood represent a cost of opportunity for women, given the lack of adequate conditions, poor understanding and inadequate approach to the problem, resulting in the interruption of formal education or definite drop-out by adolescent girls (Miquilena & Edgar, 2021).

Prior to this response, participants 10 experienced bullying inside the school which is not a good thing for someone who is pregnant and studying at the same time. A positive learning environment promotes learning and a negative environment does not aid learning. Smith (2011) stated that Bioecological theory advocates that by strengthening human relationships within supportive environments, it is possible to increase the extent of development realized into positive outcomes.

## Challenges faced by out-of-school youth after Dropping Out

Rachmat (2023) stated that challenge is a problem that exists in an activity such as teaching and learning process, using appropriate and quality solutions.

## Difficulty in Finding Work

Youths who are out of school are those who find difficulties in finding work, especially those who are lacking the required qualifications. Philippine Star (2017) revealed that millions of youths are unemployed and face bleak job prospects. The reasons for this are no access to education, training and employment due to poverty, health problems and lack of required qualifications.

From the challenges of P1, he explains that finding a job is difficult because of his age. He stated that:

*Adda met ma'am narigatan nak nga sumrek iti trabaho ma'am ta syempre ubing nak pay didiay nga time ma'am. (P1) It was hard to find a job because I was still a minor.*

Department of Labor and Employment stated that, there are approximately 4.2 million youths that are out of school or unemployed and face bleak job prospects, 3.14 million of the youths do not have access to education or skills training and employment due to poverty, health problems and lack of required qualifications

In addition, employment problems remain serious for many out-of-school youth, especially high school drop-outs. An extremely large share of unmarried male, high school drop-outs are not only unemployed but unemployed for a year or more. Estimates indicate long-term unemployment rates of

unmarried male dropouts as high as 50% among African Americans and Puerto Ricans 23% for whites (Lerman, 2005).

Prior to this response, P1 faced difficulties in finding work after dropping out of school. Dropping out of school at an early age and finding a job is very difficult as many of the hiring jobs are looking for a diploma or academic credentials which are essential in finding work. One of the pressing short-term and indeed long-term global challenges is youth unemployment and many of these are those who dropped in school (Jose et al. 2019)

**Frustrations**

Frustration is a very common experience among students nowadays. Frustrating situations impact students' learning. Today, students are more frustrated due to academic pressures, persistent challenges or obstacles in their studies and many more. These situations lead to mental stress, lack of motivation, decrease self-esteem and academic achievement among students (Chitrakar & Nisanth, 2023).

Another participant (P2) started sharing his challenges and he says that he was frustrated because he was not able to finish Senior High School (SHS). She uttered:

*Na-frustrate ak ta haan ko nalpas diay Grade 11. (P2) I was frustrated because I was not able to finish grade 11.*

Similarly, P5 reported that his mother was distressed upon learning of his decision to drop out, subsequently becoming a source of worry for her. He said:

*Idi inbagak kenni mama nga agdrop ak kasla nasaktan isuna nagbalinak nga sakit iti ulo. (P5) When I informed my mother it affected her, I became her cause of headache.*

P10 also responded the same way. She said:

*Na-frustrate ak kasi kurang kwarta tapos dagidiay ibagbaga da kanyak tapos madi pay tanggap ti family'k diay napasamak kanyak. Isu nga maysa nakaapektaran iti mental health ko. (P10) I felt frustrated because of financial matters and of other people's judgments, as well as my family cannot accept what happened to me.*

To support these claims, Cabanag (nd) exclaimed that the reasons that the out-of-school youth face why they drop from school includes the lack of money for their education even though the education is free, but supplies in their studies are needed. In addition, he also emphasizes that unsupportable parents are also one reason for not attending school.

The participants then experienced or conveyed a sense of defeat, frustration and an absence of meaningful alternatives.

These are the statements of participants 2, 5 and 10 who said the challenges they face after dropping out of school are frustration of not finishing senior high school, frustration of the lack of money that affects their mental health and hurt someone because of dropping. These challenges affect the mentality of the students that might cause them to suffer from stress or worse depression. The University of the Philippines Population Institute (2022) stated that pinoy youth in worse mental shape today, nationwide survey indicates close in one to five Filipino youth aged 15-24 have ever considered ending their life because of some reason including school related means.

**Social Judgement**

Out-of-school youths are those that are very vulnerable to social judgment from other people, they tend to say words that are not pleasant to hear and it might also cause the OSY to struggle a lot from it such as depression or any other mental illnesses or issues. Axt (2018) posited that social judgement is shaped by multiple biases operating simultaneously, but most bias-reduction interventions target only a single social category.

The participants below (P6, P7, P8, P9) began discussing their challenges after leaving school, noting that people frequently question their decision of not attending school. They responded:

*Adda met lang ate kasta, like apay ngay haan ka nag tuloy kunkunada ate. (R6) People were judging my decision to quit school, despite having sufficient money to finance my studies. Adda met ate iti sao da kasjay pero haan ko nga pinanpansin dagidiayen ate, kasla binalewalak lang dagidiayen ate. (R7) I heard many judgments but I did not put attention to their opinions about my decision. Nakadependarak pay lang iti parents ko ket nagadu iti ibagbaga dagidiay relatives mi nga madi about panagdrop ko...kasi halos amin nga kabagyak ket adda adal da. (R8) I am still dependent to my parents and I feel degraded from my relatives, because most of them are professionals. Kanayun nak ungtan ni mamang ko ta haanak sumsumreken. (R9) My mother is frequently scolding me because I no longer attend school.*

Guppy (2018) emphasized that attending school is essential for receiving a good education and is a legal obligation, whether through traditional schooling or homeschooling. Failure to attend school can anger parents. The statements of the participants indicated that, after dropping out, out-of-school youth (OSY) face social judgment, including harsh criticism for quitting despite financial capability, verbal abuse, and scolding.

## Coping Mechanisms of the Out-of-School Youth while Attending School

Stress is an inherent aspect of life, affecting everyone at various times. Each situation demands a specific coping strategy, and learning these strategies can alleviate feelings of being overwhelmed, thereby supporting mental and physical well-being. Effective stress management improves both psychological and physical health and enhances performance.

When asked about the coping mechanisms of out-of-school youth (OSY) before they decided to drop out, three key strategies were identified: engaging in leisure activities, seeking family support, and maintaining a positive outlook on life.

## Engaging in Leisure Activities

To cope with the pressure in life, people tend to find mechanisms that help them distress and relax. Thus, for many, they choose watching or engaging in leisure activities to promote their mental health and increase their sense of well-being. Movies can also be considered a form of therapy. This is evident as the Canadians aged 18-24 spend around 10.6 hours watching TV a week as their form of bonding and relaxation. Telefilm Canada also reported that more than 50 percent of Canadians watch at least one movie a week.

Furthermore, feeling suffocated or stressed, a short vacation or exploring new places can be the best solution or therapy to calm. Getting out and travelling have many benefits for both mental and physical health. Escaping stressful environments is one of the most important motivations for engaging in tourism experiences, such as helping recover from negative feelings of loneliness (Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987).

From the experience of P6, she finds comfort in relaxing and doing what she loves such as travelling and watching Korean drama. She stated:

*Awan, agpasyar pasyar nak ken agbuybuya kdrama tapno maawan iti stress. (P6) I took this opportunity to relax like traveling and watching k-drama.*

These ways of coping with stress were reflected in the study of Bhandari (2024) stating that travel has been linked to stress reduction and can alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression. Going to another country or escaping for a long weekend in a nearby town can have a strong impact on mental health.

In the case of P9, he stated that he dealt with his stress by keeping himself busy with his hobby like riding a bicycle.

*Inliwliwak lattan iti stress kon manong, kasla napan nak nagbisikleta kasjay. (P9) I find time to unwind and bring back my hobby like riding a bicycle.*

Study shows that riding a bicycle brings more oxygen and nutrients that can improve the rider's performance and promotes new thoughts patterns that generate feelings of calmness and give positive mental health. As to relaxing technique, it aids the reduction of these unpleasant responses (Bravo, et al,

2018). Additionally, Neil Shah of the Stress Management Society (n.d.) said that cycling is one of the most effective treatments for stress and in many cases has been proven to be as effective as medication.

From the above-mentioned responses of participants 6 and 9, it was concluded that leisure can be versatile and resourceful to be utilized as a coping tool in various settings and situations. It means that engaging in leisure and doing activities such as travelling, watching, and biking are good strategies to unwind, improve focus and to enable them to think about things from different angles to solve problems. As the amount of time spent in leisure pursuits increases, the amount of stress experienced decreases (Cevik, 2020).

**Getting Family Support**

Family is a safe haven, where people can find unconditional sharing and care. Family serves as the backbone of each individual through difficulties, it is the strongest source of encouragement and unwavering support. P3, P4, P5 find relief in sharing problems with their parents. They expressed:

> *Idi immuna haan ko imbaga ta mabutengak ngem idi awan talagan chance kon maududin inbaga kon nga agsardengak. (P3) At first, I was hesitant to tell my parents because I was afraid but when I no longer had the chance, I decided to talk to them.*

> *Wen Ma'am ta dadiay garud haan maawatan nagpatulungak kenni mama ngem haan ko maanusan… (P4) I tried to ask help from my mother to help with my modules, however I was still unmotivated to finish my activities.*

> *Makasangitak pay Ma'am… kayat ko kuma ipalawag diay teacher nu apay nga kasjay ti galad na kasi apan diay anakko. Feeling jay teacher barumbado siya…pero mahiyain lang siya ammo na ti weakness na…sunga dediay ti ibagbagak diay teacher, pero kasla haan da dinenggeg diay side ko, sana malapad din yung pang-unawa kasi bata pa rin yan…dediay ti kwak ta isu nga hanak pay napnapan idin di papaayaban dakon ta wala din naman akong boses eh… in the first place napanak nakiusap…dagidiay met iti words da…sayang met jay effort ko adda pay met next time…(P5) I felt emotional when I tried to speak to his teachers. I wanted to explain why my son acted that way. But the teacher already concluded that he is hard headed, the teacher doesn't know that the child is just shy, this is what I want to explain to the teachers however, I was unheard. Since I heard the judgments of the teachers, I no longer asked chance for my son.*

The statements from participants 3, 4, and 5, indicating that family serves as a support group during stressful times, demonstrate that seeking familial support is an effective coping mechanism. This support positively impacts mental well-being by providing a safe, non-judgmental space for sharing thoughts, concerns, and joys. The emotional connection with family helps reduce stress, improve mood, and foster a sense of belonging. Spending time with family significantly enhances overall well-being, and parental involvement plays a crucial role in educational achievement. (Forey et. al 2015).

**Having a Positive Outlook in Life**

People who maintain a more positive outlook in life cope better with stress, have better immunity, and promote greater feelings of happiness. They courageously surpass the challenges by brimming faith and hope in their mind. Therefore, having a positive outlook in life trains one's mind to be calm and be steady on the burning fire that may be experienced due to pressure in academics, work or even in their environment.

In the experience of another participant (P10), she tried alternatives such as Modular Learning in continuing her education. She said:

> *Impadas ko nga nagrequest ti module, instead nga sumrek ak ijay school. (P10) I tried to request a modular learning modality, instead of attending face-to-face classes.*

As Wood and Bandura (1989) claimed, a person's beliefs about their ability to mobilize courses of action is needed to achieve desired personal goals. As a result, it is a crucial psychological tool for gaining control over one's life occurrences.

**Coping Mechanisms of the Out-of-School Youth After Dropping out from School**

The results and discussion regarding coping mechanisms after dropping out from school shed light on the strategies individuals employ to deal with the challenges and emotions associated with their decision. Dropping out from school can be a significant life event, marked by feelings of uncertainty, disappointment, and frustration. Understanding how individuals cope with these circumstances is vital for both policymakers and educators to provide appropriate support and resources.

In response to the question relative to the coping mechanisms of OSY after they decided to drop out, two coping mechanisms were identified: finding employment and returning to school.

**Job Hunting**

Looking for a job after leaving school can be challenging, but with determination and a proactive approach to gaining skills and experience, opportunities can still be found.

The participants quoted below (R1) cited that after dropping out from school they decided to seek alternative education such as ALS or Alternative Learning System and decided to stop and look for a job. They stated:

*Pinadas ko met ma'am nag-try ak nag ALS ma'am pero haan ko met lang nalpas ma'am isunga nag trabaho ak lattan ma'am. Nag trabtrabaho ak idi jai Cavite santo idiay Benguet kas gardener, Ma'am (P1). I tried to enroll in ALS but I did not finish it, so I just worked. I worked in Cavite and in Benguet as gardener.*

*Idi nagsardeng ak ate nagbirok ak ti trabaho, nagwork nak dituy Baguio kas vegetable vendor. (P7) When I quit school, I worked in Baguio as a vegetable vendor.*

*Wen ate, intuloy ko nga imanage tuy junkshop ken store. (P3) I continued to manage our store and junkshop.*

*Ahm kwa Ma'am tumltulong lang ken papa idyay construction kasjay ngem tay haan unay nadagsen nga trabaho… (P4) I am helping my father in construction but I am not doing heavy tasks yet.*

*Wen Manang. Pinilik nga timmulong ijay taltalon. (P8) I chose to work and help my parents in the field.*

*Isu agwowork ak lattan dituy market. (P6) I am currently working here at the market. Agururnungak manung, tas mapanak maki-side side line ijay karuba mi, construction worker manong…(P9) I am earning money by working as construction worker. Nagonline selling nak kasi kailangak agdiskarte..(P10) I need to earn money that's why I worked as online seller*

Lee et al. (2020) emphasized the significance of psychological coping mechanisms for Out of School Youth (OSY) during their job search process, such as maintaining a positive mindset, setting realistic goals, and developing problem-solving skills to overcome obstacles and succeed in the employment market. P1, P7, and P3 pursued various paths including working as a gardener, vegetable vendor, and managing family businesses, while P4, P6, and P8 engaged in construction and farming. Garcia et al. (2021) stressed the role of strong social support networks and mentorship programs in assisting OSY with job hunting challenges, echoing Smith et al. (2018) on the importance of seeking support from family and friends, participating in skill-building activities, and utilizing community resources as common coping strategies for out-of-school youth.

Out-of-school-youths also explored job markets using social media and resources, as demonstrated by P6, P9, and P10. Lee et al. (2020) emphasized the significance of maintaining a positive mindset, setting realistic goals, and developing problem-solving skills for OSY to overcome obstacles and succeed in the employment market.

**Deciding to Return to School**

The coping mechanisms of out-of-school youth (OSY) who consider returning to school in exchange for purchasing gadgets, such as laptops, tablets, or smartphones, require examination to understand the impact of this exchange on their coping strategies and the factors influencing their decision to return to school.

The mother of the participant quoted below (P5) shared her experience by saying that his son is willing to return to school unless she will buy him a cell phone and she needs to talk to his teacher. She stated:

*Ti met kunada ma'am intuno ahm next agenroll kami ulit kunada garod…tapos andon na naman 'yong demands na nila na kailangan mo na akong bilhan ng cellphone ganyan kasdiay tapos kausapin mo si ma'am nga hannak ung-ungtan kasdiay… (They say that they will enroll next school year, they have demands like their cellphone, and asked me to talk to his teacher.)*

Khan et al. (2020) supports the importance of providing gadgets to OSY in exchange for returning to school as this can help bridge the digital divide and improve their access to educational resources.

Moreover, Ahmed and Islam (2019) revealed that social support plays a crucial role in the coping mechanisms of OSY who return to school in exchange for purchasing gadgets. It was found that community involvement, such as peer support and mentorship programs, can encourage OSY to overcome the challenges they face and continue their education.

The discussion focuses on OSY coping mechanisms, who seek to return to school in exchange for gadgets like laptops, tablets, or smartphones. R5's mother shared her experience, emphasizing the need for a cellphone before her son would consider going back to school. Khan et al. (2020) believes that providing gadgets can help OSY overcome the digital divide and enhance their educational access. Ahmed and Islam (2019) conducted a study, showing that social support and community involvement, such as peer support and mentorship programs, play a significant role in OSY's coping mechanisms and their ability to continue their education.

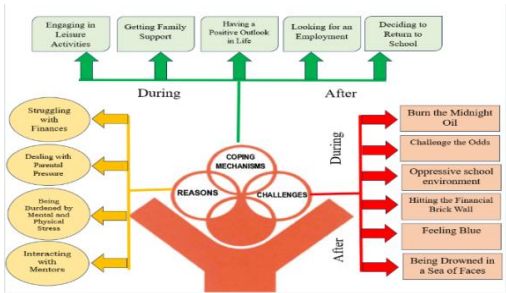**Model on the experiences of out-of-school youth**



*Figure 1. Model on the experiences of OSY*

From the data gathered in the study, reasons for the emergence of OSY, the challenges they face both while attending school and after dropping out, as well as their coping mechanisms during attending school and after dropping out from school were identified. As illustrated in the figure above, four primary reasons for dropping out emerged: financial struggles, parental pressure, mental and physical stress, and interactions with mentors. These factors suggest that students contemplating dropping out are often dealing with significant challenges.

The challenges faced by out-of-school youth (OSYs) are categorized into two phases: while attending school and after dropping out. While attending school, OSYs encountered issues such as burning the midnight oil, overcoming odds, and coping with an oppressive school environment. These difficulties often fuel their decision to drop out. After dropping out, OSYs faced challenges like financial hardship, emotional distress, and social isolation, which are direct consequences of quitting school.

Coping mechanisms were also divided into two categories: during school attendance and after dropping out. While attending school, out-of-school youths coped by engaging in leisure activities, seeking family support, and maintaining a positive outlook. After dropping out, despite the challenges, OSYs found ways to continue their lives, such as seeking employment and deciding to return to school. These coping mechanisms demonstrate the resilience of out-of-school youths in finding positive aspects amidst adversity. With the help of this model readers could easily understand the point of view of being out-of-school youth particularly with their challenges and coping mechanisms.

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a.    Funding: "This research received no external funding."
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## VI. Conclusion

In brief, this study looked into the life stories and breakthroughs of out-of-school youth near the vicinity of the school. The reasons for the emergence of out-of-school youth are the following: financial struggle, dealing with parental pressure, excessive mental and physical stress, and student-teacher relationship. In addition, the OSY faced various challenges such as academic stress, negative student-teacher relationship, oppressive school environment, difficulty in finding work, frustrations, and social judgment. Moreover, the respondents utilized different coping mechanisms which includes the following: engaging in leisure activities, getting family support, having a positive outlook in life, job hunting, and deciding to return to school. Further, the model of out-of-school youth has been identified.

Consequently, the reasons and challenges experienced by out-of school youth revealed that being an out-of-school youth has both positive and  negative implications. Their situation as out-of-school youth contributed to their personal growth, financial independence, and contributed to their families' daily needs. On the contrary, sacrificing their studies caused them to struggle in finding work with a decent salary.

The themes that have been identified from the narratives of the participants may help the teachers and administrators on what action they would take to address the increase of drop out rates. Undeniably, Filipinos give high importance to their education for them to land a job; however, due to various factors which affect the learners, the number of dropouts continue to increase. Moreover, since most of the participants' reasons for dropping out were financial matters, the barangay or local government unit may offer a job for the young people that are qualified as out-of-school youth.

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