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## Perceived Implications to the Academic Performance of Engineering Students with Bicultural Status in Batangas State University, Philippines

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### Abstract

This study aimed to distinguish the effects of having a bicultural status on engineering students' academic performance, identify their various coping mechanisms, determine their academic competency, and discover the effects of having a bicultural status on them in their extracurricular activities. The qualitative research approach and phenomenological research design were used in this study. In-depth interviews were employed to narrate the respondents' life experiences. A total of sixteen men and women who are enrolled at Batangas State University (BatStateU), aged 18-31 were chosen using the deviant case sampling technique. The interview revealed that being a bicultural student had no significant impact on their academic achievement, social and peer support are their coping mechanisms, they are academically competent despite cultural differences, and linguistic barriers pose challenges for them. Given these findings, the researchers concluded that bicultural status has no significant impact on an individual's academic achievement, that bicultural students have numerous coping strategies, that cultural differences don't affect a bicultural student's academic proficiency, and that linguistic barriers have a negative impact on extracurricular activities. It was recommended that bicultural students should be prioritized to improve their academic and extracurricular abilities, include more universities to ensure that the results are not campus-specific and lack of diversity, and the environment and BatStateU must create an association of bicultural students to expedite the response to grievances and needs to guarantee that the students are not having difficulties in their studies.

**Keywords:** Bicultural status, engineering students in BatStateU, phenomenological research design, academic performance, Philippines.

### Introduction

Nowadays, the demand for accessible, quality and affordable tertiary education is increasing, which leads to the migration of students with their own beliefs and culture internationally or even within the country itself. Education and the economic prospect are inextricable to each other, and citizens in third world countries, like the Philippines, associate education to migrate from their place to a better place and quality education with the expectation of having a better life (Browne, 2017). Furthermore, in 2017, the Philippines enacted the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, officially designated as Republic Act 10931 to encourage more Filipinos to seek higher education. Tuition is funded by the government for students attending State Universities and Colleges, while private universities may be eligible for a tuition subsidy. This aims to reduce college dropouts and promote higher education that is accessible to all regardless of cultural origin. The aforementioned Republic Act also encouraged indigenous people and foreigners with different cultures to migrate so that they as well may access quality and affordable education.

Various universities and colleges in the Philippines accept and provide international students with the best education possible, including fundamental values of global competitiveness and a variety of industry-based courses and programs that provide and equip international students with both the knowledge and skills they will need for future employment. BatStateU, founded in 1903, is one of the most notable state universities in the Philippines.

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Moreover, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has been classified as a national Center of Excellence, the BatStateU's Electronics Engineering program, as well as its various programs such as Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Teacher Education, and Development Communication. To maintain the quality and excellence of the programs, the BatStateU has examined several continuous quality improvements that attract learners not just only in the Philippines but also around the world.

Due to the stated condition, there's an increase in the rate of biculturalism in the province of Batangas, as shown in the 2018 National Migration Survey with the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) and the University of the Philippines Population Institute (UPPI) collaboration, Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon (CALABARZON) is stated to be one of the largest inter-regional migration flows from 2013 to 2018 involving five hundred twelve thousand (512,000) Filipinos. Furthermore, in terms of cross-regional internal migration, the regions with the most in-migrants were National Capital Region (NCR) (388,000), CALABARZON (293,000), Eastern Visayas (186,000), Bicol (162,000), and Davao (111,000). In addition, only 3,782 (14.8%) Filipinos have migrated in the same five-year span from 2013, with 84% having only internal migration experience and only 14% having foreign migration experience.

Bicultural people are those who have easy access to several cultural meaning systems. According to studies, some bicultural people are adaptable, changing toward situationally prominent cultural norms, others face conflict with cultural norms. The degree to which bicultural persons' cultural identities are integrated is the best predictor of how they respond to their surroundings. Integration entails resolving and uniting their cultural identities, which is typically accomplished by seeing resemblances between the two. Biculturals have a dominant identity that is shaped by the majority group's or culture's norms, values, and beliefs. Furthermore, biculturals have a heritage identity that is characterized by the degree to which they adhere to the norms, values, and beliefs of their heritage group.

Bicultural stress is produced by demands to embrace the ideals of the dominant culture while yet keeping one's own culture of origin. Bicultural stress has been studied as a condition that is closely linked to bicultural identities, to the point where navigating a bicultural setting may be difficult when individuals lack the resources to adjust to their social backgrounds. Stress can be caused by familial conflict, discrimination, insufficient language education, and peer interactions. Family obligations are an example of these stresses, as are difficulties in succeeding due to cultural differences, difficulties in school due to poor English; and rejection from peer groups due to cultural differences.

The researchers are interested in learning more about bicultural identity, how it impacts a person's academic performance, and how it affects their behavior. Because the researchers are investigating inside the course and school where individuals with bicultural status reside, the information gained in this research will be beneficial. The group sought to learn more about the idea of bicultural identity and how it relates to academic performance. The purpose of this research is to determine the merits and

disadvantages of a student having two distinct cultures in their academic performance. As a result, what transpires for bicultural engineering students will serve as a solid foundation for this research?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The aim of the study is to determine the different implications of having bicultural status on the academic performance of engineering students at BatStateU, Philippines. This study also aims to attain the following objectives:

1. To distinguish the repercussions of having bicultural status on the academic performance of engineering students.
2. To identify the various coping mechanisms of the engineering students to the effects of bicultural status on their academic performance.
3. To determine the academic competency of engineering students with bicultural status.
4. To discover the effects of having a bicultural status on engineering students in extracurricular activities.

### **Methodology**

As the study will focus on the experiences of the respondents, the researchers will utilize the phenomenological qualitative research design. This research design is needed to fully understand the different experiences and ordeals the respondents convey. Furthermore, this method allows the researchers to be free from bias and assumptions making the results accurate. The research questions would then be answered from the different descriptions of the respondents from several factors such as academic performance, coping mechanisms, and academic competency. The researchers then used these different descriptions to further understand the different implications of having a bicultural status on the academic performance of engineering students at BatStateU.

According to Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio (2019), phenomenology is a type of qualitative study that examines a person's life experiences across the world. Furthermore, the phenomenological investigation looks into what people have experienced and focuses on their perceptions of occurrences.

In-depth interviews and interview-guide questionnaire were utilized to have a deep understanding of the respondent's accounts. The interviews that would be held will remain transparent, systematic, reproducible, and credible to ensure their validity and reliability. Ethical issues were followed by asking for consent making the respondents not coerced and pressured to answer, and ensuring confidentiality by protecting their identity.

A deviant case sampling was used in this study. Sixteen (16) engineering students of BatStateU with bicultural status from first-year to fourth-year levels were identified as the respondents of the study to attain that the research will be ensured.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **1. Repercussions of having Bicultural Status on the Academic Performance of Engineering Students**

Moni et al., (2018) investigated the impact of bicultural acculturation on Latina/o college students' academic performance. In contrast to previous studies, their findings show that academic outcomes are not linked to immigrant

generational status. Integration students perform better in school and have higher educational values than those who use the assimilation strategy. A higher-grade point average (GPA) and a more pleasant school mood are linked to high levels of school effort and educational ideals. These studies shed information on how bicultural acculturation affects academic traits such as GPA, educational values, school attitude, school effort, and student bilingualism. According to Herrmann and Varnum (2018) first-generation college (FGC) students, like ethnic biculturals, must adjust to the university's middle-class environment and struggle to reconcile several cultural identities. Many models have been suggested to predict academic achievement among FGC students, but few have taken into account the cultural shift to university life. They propose that FGC students who consider their working- and middle-class identities as complementary should perform better than those who see them as incompatible.

The interview conducted by the researchers showed that despite having bicultural status at BatStateU still 14 out of 16 respondents stated that there is no huge repercussion to their academic performance. According to the respondents, being in a different nation made them adjust in many ways, but despite being bicultural at BatStateU, there are no significant consequences. Because their bicultural identity provides them confidence, the majority of respondents are socially active. Being bicultural provided some individuals the confidence to speak up in front of others, allowing them to socialize and form deep bonds with others. Some built great ties with their peers, particularly with the class representative, who will explain and assist them in understanding the majority of the Tagalog announcements. Respondents employed two learning strategies: time management and cooperation with instructors and other students. Some students participate in group studies to ask one another questions regarding the courses that they are unsure about. While some prefer to study alone in certain subjects and reflect on their lives. According to one respondent, *"For me, there are no big effects of being bicultural on my academic performance. But, being biracial adds more pressure to me from other people to do well in school because there is an expectation that I will get a good job, but I just take this as an inspiration and motivation to help them in the future."* This mindset, together with acceptance and support from their classmates and environment, contributes to their academic perseverance.

Researchers determined that being bicultural had no significant repercussions on an individual's academic achievement. Instead, being bicultural aids individuals in their social pursuits, which indirectly enhances their academic perception, the interpretation of which is based on methodical observation and evaluation of data obtained.

## 2. Coping Mechanisms of Engineering Students to the Effects of Bicultural Status

Over the last decade, the number of overseas students enrolled in American institutions has risen dramatically, and the integration of these students is a big topic in cross-cultural studies. According to Wang et al., 2018 in their study entitled "Cross-cultural Adaptation of International College Students in the United States" examined the students' patterns of psychosocial and cultural adaptation over time using a questionnaire survey from 169 overseas

students attending United State colleges. The rate of sociocultural adaptation increased gradually throughout time, with no notable reduction. In addition, foreign students differ in their destination, culture, situational and institutional elements play a role in their cross-cultural adaptation (Bethel et al., 2020). Another aspect influencing the connection between local and international students has been discovered to be cultural differences. Many scholars point out that local students in traditional tourist destinations have an ethnocentric attitude towards it. International students' experiences are clearly enhanced by solid social interactions with students in the host country. Because communication between local and foreign students is so important during university life, several studies have looked at both student groups' experiences (Aydin, 2020). This means that all international students have their own coping mechanisms depending on where their life will be comfortable.

According to the survey results, 14 out of 16 respondents said that their coping mechanism is the togetherness of relationship cultivation, cultural adjustment, adaptation, as well as socialization. Conforming to the participants, those mentioned above helped them to relax their minds and get back on track. In addition, their family, lovers, friends, or classmates are the ones who are there to clear things out whenever there's something we can't understand. As stated by one of the participants, *"Usually a good day off, whether with friends, a lover, or just a 'me' day, usually helps me relax and get back on track."* In spite of that, a minority of the participants tend to be by themselves or just look to some materials as their coping mechanism. Since some of them have strong self-encouragement and can easily adapt to different cultures. This was also mentioned by Maggudayao (2018) in her research that the scarcity of certain resources has taught them independence, resourcefulness, and determination. Many people attribute this to their epiphany or realize that indeed the Philippines is a country with many challenges, but abundant strength required. These transformational processes make them not only appreciate Filipino and other cultures but also their own culture and themselves.

Researchers discovered that spending time with family, lovers, friends, or classmates, cultural adjustment, adaptability, and socializing are among the coping methods of students with bicultural status at BatStateU, based on systematic observation and interpretation of the data gathered.

## 3. Academic Competency of Engineering students with Bicultural Status

Immigration status or biculturalism could have negative, and positive impacts on educational outcomes. Cultural differences may also affect students' understanding of content, according to some research, because students from different nations may not share the cultural experiences required to read a large number of books. Furthermore, studies demonstrate that adults who were raised to tolerate multiple cultures are more creative, particularly in terms of fluency, adaptability, and novelty. Learners from different cultures may have different perspectives on student performance, such as student-teacher relationship and the importance of education. Furthermore, a student's motivation may have a substantial impact on his or her competency and capacity to thrive in school (Ben-Eliyahu

et al., 2018). Moreover, bilingualism due to bicultural status has been shown to be a valuable asset for cognitive abilities known for its role in relatively high executive functioning, as numerous studies have shown that bilingual individuals who are also bicultural outperform monolingual students in academic activities (Bialystok, 2016). This means that biculturalism has its various pros and cons depending on an individual.

At BatStateU, 15 out of 16 respondents said that they are academically competent despite having bicultural status in the Engineering Department in the said university. According to the participants, they are academically competent because of the assistance of their classmates and approachable instructors, who also provide more effective communication and academic performance in both face-to-face and virtual class settings. One of the respondents cited that *"With the support of my classmates and instructors, who provided me with some lecture notes and guides, I can proudly say that I am competent and dedicated to become a more effective and involved student at BatStateU."* However, the minority of engineering student respondents view that bicultural status has a negative effect on the academic competency of the student because some lectures are not translated into the English language. The said situation furtherly drives the student to ask their fellow students to translate it for them and also search for an alternative way to learn using Youtube which slows the learner down in accomplishing the given task. This furtherly noted by Farrell et al., (2018) in their study entitled College Connectedness: The Student Perspective that effective student interaction, as well as positive attitudes and perceptions about the environment, are required for effective learning in higher education.

The researchers found out that students with bicultural status at BatStateU are academically competent despite cultural differences with their peers and instructors based on thorough observation and analysis of the data gathered.

#### **4. Effects of having Bicultural Status in Extracurricular Activities**

Integration, persistence, and, more crucially, involvement and engagement are all dependent on overcoming differences during the college transition. International students gain bicultural competency to help them overcome cultural obstacles by conforming to their environment. Bicultural competence is defined as someone's ability to internationalize many cultures in order to work effectively and sustain good interpersonal interactions in those cultures and people within them. Some research has found that early-grade patterns of involvement and disengagement have a long-term impact on students' identification and participation in later years. According to the study of Chen & Padilla (2019) adults who were raised to accept several cultures exhibit more creativity, particularly in fluency, adaptability, and novelty. Students who actively participate in extracurricular activities will experience greater feelings of acceptability and value for the school, both of which are important components of effective engagement during their college life.

Despite having bicultural status at BatStateU, 13 out of 16 respondents stated difficulties. Language barriers are one of the issues, according to the participants. Some respondents have experienced difficulty in communicating, particularly students who prefer to converse in their own language,

which is Filipino. This is significant especially when it comes to extracurricular activities which rely on the communication of the group. As stated by one of the participants, *"Involving myself in extracurricular activities while having a bicultural status is hard to think of, because of being afraid of being judged by other people."* Despite the fear, it shows that most of the other respondents believe that being bicultural has a positive impact on them, particularly in terms of academic and non-academic activities, which are linked to a variety of measurable outcomes and have served as the foundation for internalizing the values commonly displayed in college, such as self-motivation and confidence.

Based on observation and data collection, the researchers found that the elements determining the quality of students' extracurricular life are not intelligence, but linguistic barriers that provide challenges to engineering college students.

#### **Conclusions**

The results and discussion subsequently became the foundation of the following conclusions

1. The impact of bicultural status on academic performance had no significant effects on an individual's academic achievement, but it did indirectly improve engineering students' academic perception at BatStateU. Being bicultural, on the other hand, helps people in their social pursuits, which improves their academic perception, which is based on systematic observation and evaluation of facts acquired.
2. The various coping mechanisms of the engineering students to the effects of bicultural status on their academic performances are identified as spending time with family, lovers, friends, or classmates, cultural adjustment, adaptability, and socializing.
3. Cultural variations have not had a substantial negative effect on the competency of a bicultural engineering student.
4. The effects of having a bicultural status on engineering students has found that the elements determining the quality of students' extracurricular life are not intelligence, but linguistic barriers that provide challenges to engineering students.

#### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and discussions, the following recommendations are drawn

1. Bicultural students should be prioritized to improve their academic and extracurricular abilities. This will help the university's awareness of inequities among students of diverse racial, ethnic, and other population groupings, including the re-establishment of a working committee to oversee this area and the encouragement of relevant adjunct studies.
2. Future researchers should include more universities and campuses within. This is to guarantee that the results are not campus-specific and lack of diversity. Several isolated cases may also exist from other universities thus it may yield varying results.
3. The environment and the BatStateU must create an association of bicultural students to expedite the response to grievances and needs to guarantee that the students are not having difficulties in their studies.

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