From beginners to achievers: unlocking the late bloomers academic journey

PASCUA, Cristel Mae R. (1); TANILON, April D. (2) ; CARIAGA , Joylyn M. (3), RIVERA , Katrina C. (4), LOPEZ, Monica L. (5), SENA, Sofia Marie N. (6), ANCHETA, Oscar JR. O.(7)

(1) 0009-0008-3517-4189; Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University-Mid La Union Campus. College of Education, Bachelor of Elementary Education, San Fernando City, LA Union (SFC-LU), Philippines.. cpascua@dmmmsu.edu.ph.

(2) 0009-0002-3436-2424; Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University-Mid La Union Campus. College of Education, Bachelor of Elementary Education, San Fernando City, LA Union (SFC-LU), Philippines.. atanilon@dmmmsu.edu.ph.

(3) 0009-0007-5978-7388; Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University-Mid La Union Campus. College of Education, Bachelor of Elementary Education, San Fernando City, LA Union (SFC-LU), Philippines.. jcariage@dmmmsu.edu.ph.

(4) 0009-0007-3222-936X; Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University-Mid La Union Campus. College of Education, Bachelor of Elementary Education, San Fernando City, LA Union (SFC-LU), Philippines.. krivera@dmmmsu.edu.ph.

(5) 0009-0000-3593-379X; Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University-Mid La Union Campus. College of Education, Bachelor of Elementary Education, San Fernando City, LA Union (SFC-LU), Philippines.. mlopez@dmmmsu.edu.ph.

(6) 0009-0006-7212-9446; Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University-Mid La Union Campus. College of Education, Bachelor of Elementary Education, San Fernando City, LA Union (SFC-LU), Philippines.. ssena@dmmmsu.edu.ph.

 (7) 0000-0001-5530-4288; Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University-Mid La Union Campus. San Fernando City, LA Union (SFC-LU), Philippine. oancheta@dmmmsu.edu.ph.

A B S T R A C T

This study investigates the academic trajectories of late bloomers, emphasizing their unique pathways to success despite early challenges. The research uses descriptive phenomenology and in-depth interviews with three participants to reveal that late bloomers often leverage intrinsic motivation, supportive peer networks, and personal passions to overcome academic obstacles. Key themes include the significance of goal-setting, the impact of emotional and practical support, and the role of personal interests in driving academic persistence. The findings highlight the need for targeted educational strategies and supportive environments to foster student resilience and achievement. Recommendations include enhancing teacher training, promoting personalized support, and encouraging collaborative learning. This research provides valuable insights for improving educational practices and supporting diverse student needs.

RESUMO

Este estudo investiga as trajetórias acadêmicas dos "late bloomers", destacando seus caminhos únicos para o sucesso apesar dos desafios iniciais. Utilizando fenomenologia descritiva e entrevistas aprofundadas com três participantes, a pesquisa revela que os "late bloomers" frequentemente utilizam motivação intrínseca, redes de apoio de colegas e paixões pessoais para superar obstáculos acadêmicos. Temas principais incluem a importância da definição de metas, o impacto do suporte emocional e prático, e o papel dos interesses pessoais na persistência acadêmica. Os resultados destacam a necessidade de estratégias educacionais direcionadas e ambientes de apoio para promover a resiliência e o sucesso dos alunos. As recomendações incluem a melhoria da formação de professores, a promoção de suporte personalizado e o incentivo ao aprendizado colaborativo. Esta pesquisa oferece insights valiosos para aprimorar as práticas educacionais e apoiar as diversas necessidades dos alunos.

Introduction

Late bloomers are individuals who initially struggle academically but later achieve excellence. The term commonly refers to young children who develop skills such as language, reading, or social interaction later than their peers. However, late bloomers only suddenly become smart or talented partially due to peer pressure, parental guidance, and socioeconomic status. These students typically receive assistance in various subjects through programs such as basic skills instruction or academic intervention services. They often do not meet the requisite benchmarks, including yearly standardized tests, local diagnostic and formative assessments, and other school-based metrics, and therefore require additional support (Audet, 2019).

Even before COVID-19 exacerbated educational challenges, the Philippines' financial status significantly contributed to growing education issues, particularly affecting late bloomers. Many children, youth, and adults, including young adults, are left behind due to unfair access to learning opportunities. A critical insight from this study is that many tested individuals came from public schools, highlighting a crisis where many Filipinos cannot read or perform basic math. There is a clear class divide between rich and poor students in the country. Less developed states could focus more on learning if it were a top priority (UNESCO, 2020). Many public schools need more computers and other tools, and there is a significant shortfall in public school teachers among the country's lowest-paid workers. Additionally, over 3 million children, youth, and adults remain unenrolled since the school shutdown, leading to long-term effects such as misinformation, poor decision-making, and other social concerns (Staff et al., 2021).

Little formal research has been conducted on late bloomers, with much of academia ignoring this aspect of human development. However, scholars have recently started exploring the late bloomer concept, debunking the "myth of average," and studying individual development intricacies. This study explores what it means to be a late bloomer in a culture obsessed with early success. In many societies, there is an intense focus on early success, where high achievements at a young age are celebrated and seen as indicators of future success. This cultural obsession places pressure on individuals to excel early in life, often leading to anxiety and stress. This phenomenon is evident in various sectors, including education, sports, and career development (Rose, 2016). In education, the emphasis on early success is visible through standardized testing, accelerated programs for gifted students, and early college admissions processes. Media and popular culture also play a significant role in perpetuating this obsession, frequently highlighting success stories of young prodigies and celebrities, creating a skewed perception of success (Brooks, 2019).

Recent studies have challenged the notion that early success is the only path to achievement. Researchers like Todd Rose argue that the "myth of average" overlooks the

PASCUA, Cristel Mae R. [1]; TANILON, April D. [2]; CARIAGA , Joylyn M. [3], RIVERA , Katrina C. [4], LOPEZ, Monica L. [5] SENA, Sofia Marie N. [6], ANCHETA, Oscar JR. O.[7]

unique developmental trajectories of individuals. Rose and other scholars emphasize that late bloomers often possess resilience, adaptability, and a strong sense of self, which can lead to tremendous long-term success and fulfillment (Rose, 2016). Research indicates that finding one's path later in life can be advantageous for several reasons. Late bloomers often have more time to explore different interests and develop a deeper understanding of their passions. They may also have more life experiences, contributing to a well-rounded perspective and vital problem-solving skills (Kaufman, 2020). The journey of a late bloomer can foster persistence and determination, qualities essential for overcoming challenges and achieving long-term goals (Robinson, 2009).

To support late bloomers, it is crucial to move away from the early bloomer mindset and recognize the value of diverse developmental timelines. Educational systems and workplaces can benefit from adopting more flexible and inclusive approaches that cater to individual strengths and potentials. Encouraging a culture that values lifelong learning and personal growth can help individuals find their unique paths and achieve their full potential at their own pace. This study highlights how finding one's path later in life can benefit long-term academic achievement and happiness. Potential late bloomers need to move away from society's early bloomer mindset and find their unique path of discovery (Brooks, 2019; Kaufman, 2020; Robinson, 2009; Rose, 2016).

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory views child development as a complex system influenced by multiple levels of the surrounding environment, from family and school to cultural values, laws, and customs. This theory illustrates how various environmental systems, such as microsystems (family, peers), mesosystems (interactions between systems), ecosystemic (community, school), and macrosystems (culture, society), can influence the academic success of late bloomers (MSc, 2023). Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory posits that children learn by observing others, modeling behaviors, and imitation. Bandura identifies three factors shaping a child's behavior: influence, reward, and self-efficacy. Late bloomers may struggle to develop cognitive skills, but through social modeling and self-efficacy, they can improve their academic achievements (Robinson, 2022).

Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory explores the role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in motivation and how these factors affect academic success. Learners with high self-efficacy attribute failures to lower effort, while those with low self-efficacy attribute failure to low ability. Self-efficacy influences task choice and perseverance (Hayat et al., 2020). Lazarus and Folkman's Coping Theories describe cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage external and internal demands. This theory provides insights into how late bloomers adapt to challenges and manage stress through strategies like problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and seeking social support. Late bloomers often need to adapt

to changing circumstances and embrace new opportunities. Self-efficacy, or belief in one's ability to overcome challenges, is crucial for their success (Ba, 2023).

Grit Theory emphasizes the importance of passion and perseverance in achieving long-term goals. Grit helps individuals stay motivated and accomplish complex tasks despite setbacks. It is a crucial driver of achievement and success, independent of talent and intelligence. Resilience, the ability to recover from or adjust to misfortune or change, is essential for late bloomers to overcome obstacles and achieve success (Duckworth, 2019; SupaduDev, 2023). Social Support Theory suggests that a strong network of social connections provides emotional, informational, and practical support during times of stress or challenge, aiding late bloomers in achieving success. Emotional support helps overcome self-doubt, informational support provides necessary guidance and resources, and a sense of belonging helps late bloomers feel connected (Blackbryn, 2023).

Dweck's Growth Mindset Theory emphasizes that personal characteristics, including intellectual ability, can be developed through hard work and dedication. Adopting a growth mindset helps late bloomers overcome self-doubt, develop resilience, and achieve their full potential (Strobel, 2023). Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) refers to the gap between what a learner can do independently and with guidance. Late bloomers benefit from the ZPD as it provides targeted instruction and feedback, helping them develop skills and build confidence and motivation (Mcleod, 2023).

There is a significant gap in the research on late bloomers, and this study aims to fill that void. Little formal research has been conducted on late bloomers, with much of academia ignoring this aspect of human development. However, scholars have recently started exploring the late bloomer concept, debunking the "myth of average," and studying individual development intricacies. This study connects theoretical frameworks with practical findings, comprehensively understanding late bloomers' academic journeys. Examining how late bloomers navigate their unique paths to success can provide valuable insights into educational strategies and interventions. This research is crucial for promoting inclusivity and ensuring that all students, regardless of their developmental timelines, have the opportunity to achieve academic success and personal fulfillment (Ancheta, O. J., & Casem, R. Q. 2024). This study highlights how finding one's path later in life can benefit long-term academic achievement. Potential late bloomers need to move away from society's early bloomer mindset and find their unique path of discovery.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed descriptive phenomenology as a qualitative method to explore the experiences of late bloomers. Descriptive phenomenology seeks understanding psychological and sociological phenomena through lived experiences (Neureber et al., 2019). The aim was to

PASCUA, Cristel Mae R. [1]; TANILON, April D. [2]; CARIAGA , Joylyn M. [3], RIVERA , Katrina C. [4], LOPEZ, Monica L. [5] SENA, Sofia Marie N. [6], ANCHETA, Oscar JR. O.[7]

capture late bloomers' narratives, perspectives, and feelings and produce detailed descriptions of their journey from beginner to achiever.

Data Collection

The study was conducted in La Union, Philippines, gathering data through in-depth face-to-face interviews with three participants selected using criterion sampling. Using a small sample size, such as three participants, is well-supported in qualitative research, particularly when employing in-depth interviews and descriptive phenomenology. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research often involves smaller sample sizes because the aim is to gain a deep, nuanced understanding of specific phenomena rather than to generalize findings to a larger population. This approach is efficient in studies that explore complex, individual experiences in detail.

Criterion sampling was employed to ensure that the participants met specific criteria essential for the study. The criteria included having failed grades in early education, experiencing prolonged academic struggles, achieving notable academic success in higher education, being aged between 18 and 45, and residing within La Union. These criteria ensured that the participants had relevant experiences that could provide valuable insights into the late bloomer phenomenon.

The three participants were chosen based on these criteria. Participant A, aged 22, struggled with academic failures during early schooling but later achieved honors in college, illustrating the potential for overcoming initial difficulties. Participant B, aged 35, faced extended academic struggles throughout their educational journey but ultimately received recognition for academic excellence in higher education. Participant C, aged 42, experienced consistent early academic failures but later attained high academic awards, highlighting the transformative power of persistence and resilience.

Instrumentation

The data collection for this study employed semi-structured interviews, a method well-suited for exploring the nuanced experiences of late bloomers. Semi-structured interviews offer a blend of structured and flexible questioning, allowing researchers to delve deeply into participants' journeys while also adapting questions based on the conversation's flow (Bhat, 2023). This approach facilitates natural dialogue and provides the flexibility to probe further into participants' responses, ensuring that the data collected is rich and comprehensive.

The development and validation of the interview instrument were carried out with meticulous attention to ensure its effectiveness. Initially, the interview questions were crafted based on a thorough review of existing literature and theoretical frameworks related to late bloomers and educational achievement. This review helped ensure the questions addressed relevant themes and constructs pertinent to the study's objectives. It was subjected to expert

review by a panel of qualitative research and educational psychology specialists to validate the instrument further. Their feedback was instrumental in refining the questions to enhance their clarity, relevance, and capacity to elicit meaningful data.

A pilot test was also conducted with a small sample of individuals who met the study criteria but were not included in the final sample. This pilot phase provided practical insights into the effectiveness of the questions and the overall interview process, allowing for adjustments based on pilot participants' feedback. This iterative process ensured the final interview instrument was well-validated and reliable for the main study.

During the data collection, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted, fostering a rapport with participants and enabling in-depth exploration of their experiences. The interviews were audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common themes and insights. This comprehensive approach to instrument validation and data collection contributed to the study's ability to provide valuable insights into the late bloomer phenomenon, offering a detailed understanding of how individuals overcome early academic challenges to achieve later success.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the interview data, a standard method in qualitative research involving three main steps: identification, analysis, and reporting of themes that emerged from the data (Viasmoradi et al., 2013). The interviews were transcribed from audio recordings to written documents to ensure accuracy in data representation (Tejeda, 2023).

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines by obtaining proper consent and ensuring the confidentiality of participants. Approval was sought from relevant authorities, and participants were informed about the study's purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw at any time (Groenewald, 2004). All data collected were used solely for academic and research purposes, treated with scholarly rigor, and referenced appropriately.

By employing these rigorous methodologies and ethical considerations, this study aimed to provide comprehensive insights into the educational journeys of late bloomers, contributing to the broader understanding of academic achievement and personal development.

Results and Discussion

The results and discussion section of this study will center on the following objectives: investigating the academic setbacks or challenges faced by late bloomers during their early education, analyzing the coping mechanisms utilized to overcome initial academic hurdles, and identifying effective interventions or support systems that contribute to the academic

PASCUA, Cristel Mae R. [1]; TANILON, April D. [2]; CARIAGA , Joylyn M. [3], RIVERA , Katrina C. [4], LOPEZ, Monica L. [5] SENA, Sofia Marie N. [6], ANCHETA, Oscar JR. O.[7]

advancement of late bloomers. These findings are intended to offer a comprehensive understanding of the educational trajectory of late bloomers and suggest strategies for enhancing their educational achievements.

1. Academic Setbacks

Academic setbacks and challenges encountered by late bloomers revealed several thematic insights, notably termed the "Numeric Odyssey" and "Language Renaissance."

Numeric Odyssey. This refers to the complex and often challenging journey individuals undertake as they navigate the world of mathematics. This concept captures the struggles and progress of mastering numerical concepts, equations, and problem-solving techniques. For many students, this journey is marked by difficulties and apprehensions, particularly in fractions, subtraction, and other fundamental mathematical operations. As reflected in Participant 1's experience, "I am not good in mathematics, particularly with fractions and subtraction," and Participant 3's acknowledgment, "I struggled with math; I find it challenging," the Numeric Odyssey embodies the personal and educational challenges faced in mathematical comprehension and application.

Langoban (2020) identifies several key factors influencing mathematical proficiency, including a learner's skills and experiences, prior exposure to mathematics, and inherent mathematical inclination. Many students, lacking a natural affinity for mathematics, often prefer to avoid it when it is not mandatory, highlighting the significant impact of educational and environmental factors on their perception of difficulty. Research into the learning of fractions, for instance, reveals common misconceptions and conceptual hurdles students face, which align with the difficulties expressed by participants in this study (Jordan et al., 2019). Addressing these challenges through effective interventions is essential, emphasizing the need for tailored educational strategies to improve conceptual understanding and application.

In addition, Klang et al. (2021) demonstrate that cooperative learning interventions can substantially improve mathematical problem-solving, particularly in diverse classroom settings. Integrating cooperative learning approaches with problem-solving strategies boosts academic performance and highlights the role of social acceptance and peer relationships in enhancing learning outcomes.

Language Renaissance. The theme of "Language Renaissance" is prominently illustrated by Participant 2's remark, "I struggled with all subjects, especially those related to English." This personal account highlights broader difficulties in English language acquisition, echoed by Kempis et al. (2020). Their research underscores students' widespread challenges in foundational areas such as reading, writing, and grammar (Ancheta, O. O. Jr., & Ochoco, C. A. E. 2023, Jr Ancheta, O. 2024). To address these issues effectively, it is imperative to provide targeted support and tailored teaching strategies. Implementing such measures can

significantly enhance students' academic performance and help them overcome language-related barriers, ultimately contributing to their educational success.

These academic setbacks underscore the complexity of educational hurdles late bloomers face, intertwined with cognitive development theories such as Piaget's concepts of assimilation and accommodation. Late bloomers navigate challenges through perseverance and resilience, fostering personal growth and a deeper understanding of their academic strengths. Their journey exemplifies the transformative power of determination and individualized support in achieving unexpected academic achievements and personal fulfillment. These insights resonate with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, emphasizing the role of social interaction and cultural context in shaping cognitive development, further underscoring the multifaceted nature of educational success.

2. Coping Mechanisms

Late bloomers employ a variety of coping mechanisms to overcome academic challenges, categorized into three prominent themes: "Fruitful Objectives," "Solidarity Network," and "Harvesting Growth."

Fruitful Objectives. The "Fruitful Objectives" theme highlights the participants' dedication to achieving academic success. Participant 1 stated, "I have been studying a lot to achieve good grades," Participant 3 described their commitment to persistent effort in their studies. Good grades, as indicators of diligence and understanding, are crucial markers of academic mastery and potential future opportunities (Steinmayr et al., 2019). This focus aligns with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan), which suggests that students are driven by intrinsic motivation for personal growth and fulfillment through their academic endeavors. Grit Theory (Duckworth) further supports this by emphasizing the role of sustained passion and perseverance, especially in overcoming initial difficulties in subjects such as Mathematics and English. Participants' proactive strategies, including seeking support from peers, family, and educators, demonstrate their resilience in overcoming procrastination and self-doubt, effectively turning their aspirations into tangible achievements.

Solidarity Network. The "Solidarity Network" theme underscores the significance of engaging with academically focused peers to enhance academic performance. Participant 2 noted the positive influence of being surrounded by peers committed to their studies, highlighting how these peer connections facilitate collaborative learning, idea exchange, and mutual motivation. Research by Filade (2019) supports this, showing that peer groups play a vital role in shaping academic outcomes by encouraging positive study habits and contributing to higher grades.

I am harvesting growth. The theme "Harvesting Growth" metaphorically represents the development of personal and intellectual maturity through academic challenges. Participant 3's reflection, "I strive, invest effort in my studies, set goals, and

PASCUA, Cristel Mae R. [1]; TANILON, April D. [2]; CARIAGA , Joylyn M. [3], RIVERA , Katrina C. [4], LOPEZ, Monica L. [5] SENA, Sofia Marie N. [6], ANCHETA, Oscar JR. O.[7]

mature," emphasizes how goal-setting and personal development play crucial roles in overcoming academic obstacles. The research underscores that clear goal-setting enhances motivation and aligns with the findings that goal-setting and self-efficacy are significant predictors of academic success (Steinmayr et al., 2019).

These experiences are consistent with Social Cognitive Theory, which posits that individuals learn and adapt behaviors through observation and modeling (Bandura, 1986). Participants' experiences illustrate how supportive academic environments, where behaviors modeled by peers who prioritize academic success are emulated, foster determination and perseverance in their studies.

In summary, late bloomers navigate academic challenges through personal motivation, supportive networks, and goal-oriented strategies. These elements demonstrate their resilience and capacity for growth. Educators can utilize these insights by creating environments that promote goal-setting, self-efficacy, and peer collaboration, thereby enhancing student engagement and academic achievement. Such strategies help students overcome obstacles and nurture a lifelong commitment to learning and personal development.

3. Support Systems

Late bloomers shared several guidance and beliefs that empower them to strive for success, with four themes: "Teachers as Builders of the Future," "Support Network," "Animal Enthusiast," and "Reflective Thinking."

Teachers as Builders of the Future. The theme "Teachers as Builders of the Future" highlights teachers' profound influence on students' academic growth and overall achievements. Teachers are instrumental in nurturing a love for learning, instilling discipline, and providing critical guidance throughout students' educational journeys. For instance, Participant 1 reflected, "I was motivated by my teacher because she was very strict," demonstrating how a teacher's approach extends beyond instruction to include emotional and motivational support. This influence manifests in various aspects of teaching, including instructional strategies, classroom management, personal interactions, and the emotional and motivational support provided to students.

Supporting this notion, Karabenick and Sharma's (2019) study, "The Relationship between Teacher Support and Students' Academic Emotions: A Meta-Analysis," underscores the significant impact of teacher support on students' emotional experiences in academics. Their research indicates that solid teacher support significantly enhances students' positive academic emotions and reduces negative ones. Students who perceive substantial support from their teachers exhibit greater motivation, improved academic performance, and more positive emotional experiences in school. This aligns with Participant 1's observation, emphasizing the crucial role of teachers in creating an encouraging and supportive learning environment that can significantly boost students' motivation and success.

Wang (2023) further elaborates on the role of teachers in shaping future generations. Teachers are vital in guiding students' educational and career paths, contributing to societal improvement. Effective teaching requires adherence to principles and regulations designed to deliver high-quality knowledge. This commitment to education is an ongoing process, with continuous development and adaptation of innovative teaching methods. Historically, the importance of education has increased, leading educators to develop new strategies that enhance understanding and provide structured learning experiences. These strategies offer quality education and build a strong foundation for young learners.

In addition, Souza (2023), in "Teachers: The Architects of the Future," highlights the extraordinary ability of teachers to inspire a lifelong passion for learning. By fostering an engaging and nurturing classroom environment, teachers stimulate curiosity and encourage students to explore beyond traditional academic boundaries. This ability to instill a sense of wonder and a passion for knowledge empowers students to become lifelong learners, continuously seeking new ideas and experiences.

In summary, teachers are pivotal in shaping students' academic journeys and future successes. Their impact goes beyond mere instruction, encompassing the creation of supportive environments that enhance motivation and academic performance. Teachers contribute significantly to developing students into lifelong learners and active societal contributors by integrating effective teaching practices and fostering robust support and engagement.

Support Network. The "Support Network" theme encompasses various forms of assistance, including emotional support, academic help, social integration, and practical advice. Participant 2 observed, "By surrounding myself with those grade-conscious individuals, they influence me to strive in my studies." A Support Network is a group of individuals who provide mutual emotional, informational, or practical support, often based on shared experiences or interests. For late bloomers, having supportive peers can offer crucial encouragement and guidance, helping them stay focused on their goals even in the face of challenges and setbacks.

Research supports the importance of a "Support Network" in enhancing academic performance. Rimpela et al. (2020), in their study "Academic Well-Being and Structural Characteristics of Peer Networks in School," found that students who are well-integrated into their peer networks tend to experience less school burnout and greater engagement in their academic work. This indicates that a supportive network of academically focused peers can positively influence students' academic efforts and achievements. The findings suggest that fostering strong peer relationships within academic settings can significantly enhance student motivation and overall performance by encouraging collaborative learning and meaningful peer connections.

PASCUA, Cristel Mae R. [1]; TANILON, April D. [2]; CARIAGA , Joylyn M. [3], RIVERA , Katrina C. [4], LOPEZ, Monica L. [5] SENA, Sofia Marie N. [6], ANCHETA, Oscar JR. O.[7]

Margolis (2019), in "Increasing Struggling Learners' Self-Efficacy: What Tutors Can Do and Say," highlights that self-efficacy is crucial for motivation and learning. Students with high self-efficacy exhibit greater motivation, effort, persistence, and academic success than those with low self-efficacy. Struggling learners with low self-efficacy often avoid academic tasks or give up easily, diminishing their chances of success. Through one-on-one or small group interactions, tutors can play a crucial role in enhancing students' self-efficacy by understanding and addressing its sources, thereby improving academic outcomes.

Further, Garcia (2024), in "Love of Animals and Interpersonal Affectionate Behavior," notes that while peer effects within broader grade-level groups might be minimal, significant peer effects are evident within classroom settings. This suggests that peers in the same classroom influence individual achievement gains more than peers from different grades.

Social Learning Theory also provides a framework for understanding the impact of peer support. This theory posits that individuals learn by observing and imitating others. When students see their peers demonstrating positive behaviors or successfully overcoming challenges, they are likely to adopt similar behaviors. Thus, peer support is a platform for modeling effective behaviors, attitudes, and skills, which can be particularly influential for late bloomers.

A robust support network is vital in motivating and guiding late bloomers. Mentors, role models, and supportive peers provide the encouragement and belief necessary for overcoming obstacles and embracing their unique educational paths. This network fuels their motivation and helps unlock their full potential, enabling them to succeed on their own terms.

Animal Enthusiast. The third theme, "Animal Enthusiast," highlights how a deep passion for animals can drive personal development and achievement later in life. An animal enthusiast is characterized by a profound interest in and affection for animals, often leading them to invest significant time and effort into understanding and caring for them. This commitment is not just a hobby but a journey of self-discovery, growth, and compassion. Participant 3 noted, "To be honest, I was inspired to strive in my studies because of my pets; I wanted them to have a proper and decent life." This statement reflects how the desire to provide a better life for pets can inspire academic and personal dedication. For Participant 3, their passion for animals provided a unique perspective and a solid motivation to achieve, demonstrating how personal interests can profoundly impact academic and personal development.

Research supports the idea that having pets can positively influence motivation and performance. McCullough et al. (2019), in their study, "Measuring the Social, Behavioral, and Academic Effects of Classroom Pets on Third and Fourth-Grade Students," found that pets in the classroom improved students' social skills, reading competence and reduced internalizing behaviors such as withdrawal and hyperactivity. This suggests that pets play a significant role

in motivating students and enhancing their academic performance, aligning with Participant 3's experience of being inspired to work hard for the benefit of their pets.

Furthermore, Guthrie et al. (2019), in "Human Love Styles and Attitude towards Pets," report that pets positively affect human physical and psychological well-being and interpersonal relationships. Generally, individuals with a positive view of people tend to have a favorable attitude towards pets. This connection highlights how a positive perception of animals can enhance overall well-being and motivation.

The magazine "The Psychology of Animal Lovers" also explores how social and cultural factors, personality traits, and early life experiences shape our attitudes toward animals. Genetic factors may also play a role in fostering empathy towards animals. Animal lovers are often more empathetic and compassionate, similar to the love and care shown towards children. This empathy is reinforced by oxytocin, which facilitates bonding between humans and animals. Studies indicate that women, in particular, tend to show greater empathy towards animals compared to men (Magazine, 2023).

These findings align with Vroom's Expectancy Theory, which posits that motivation is closely linked to the belief that one's efforts will lead to desired outcomes. According to this theory, individuals are more motivated when they believe that their actions will result in achieving their goals. This theory suggests that aligning their efforts with goals can enhance motivation and drive for late bloomers. By embracing their passions and seeing the potential outcomes of their hard work, late bloomers can foster more extraordinary dedication and success in their personal and academic pursuits.

Reflective Thinking. The theme of "Reflective Thinking" is exemplified by Participant 1: "Hardships in life, you know you will not earn people's respect if you do not have an education." Similarly, Participant 2 remarked, "Our family situation inspired me because we came from a poor family." Reflective thinking involves a deep awareness of one's knowledge, assumptions, and past experiences. It is a process of critical analysis that helps individuals make sense of their experiences by examining different perspectives and understanding the implications of their attitudes or practices. This higher-order cognitive process enables individuals to question their assumptions, reflect on their learning, and articulate their insights through various forms of expression.

The impact of poverty on students' academic experiences is profound, influencing their motivation and perseverance. Students often view their economic hardships as a driving force to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals, driven by a desire to alleviate their families' struggles and secure a better future. This mindset fosters resilience and personal growth as individuals navigate their challenges and transform difficulties into opportunities for academic success (Jr Ancheta, O. 2024).

Smith et al. (2020), in their study, "The Impact of Socioeconomic Status on Academic Performance," provide empirical evidence supporting these findings. Their longitudinal

PASCUA, Cristel Mae R. [1]; TANILON, April D. [2]; CARIAGA , Joylyn M. [3], RIVERA , Katrina C. [4], LOPEZ, Monica L. [5], SENA, Sofia Marie N. [6], ANCHETA, Oscar JR. O.[7]

research highlights the significant challenges students from disadvantaged backgrounds face and their effects on their academic performance and motivation. The study emphasizes addressing socioeconomic disparities to support these students effectively. This research aligns with the participants' experiences, underscoring the crucial role of socioeconomic factors in shaping educational outcomes and the need for targeted interventions.

Reflective thinking on these personal journeys reveals how overcoming adversity, discovering personal strengths, and maintaining motivation are central to late bloomers' academic success. Through resilience and a sense of purpose, late bloomers transform from beginners to achievers, demonstrating the profound impact of personal growth and development on academic excellence. Understanding these factors and providing tailored support can help educators empower late bloomers, facilitating their path to success and unlocking their full potential. The insights participants share offer valuable guidance and opportunities for those on similar journeys, fostering a renewed sense of purpose and fulfillment.

Conclusion

In exploring the academic journeys of late bloomers, a detailed examination reveals a complex interplay of setbacks, coping mechanisms, and support systems that shape their paths to success. The challenges late bloomers face, particularly in subjects like mathematics and English, underscore the need for targeted educational interventions. They understand specific hurdles, such as conceptual mathematics barriers or foundational language skills gaps. Institutions and educators can implement tailored support programs based on research-backed strategies to enhance proficiency and understanding in these critical areas (Acharya, 2019; Jordan et al., 2019).

Coping mechanisms employed by late bloomers highlight the importance of intrinsic motivation and resilience. Strategies such as setting fruitful objectives, building supportive peer networks, and drawing inspiration from personal passions such as animal enthusiasm play pivotal roles. Educators should foster environments that promote goal-setting, collaborative learning, and opportunities for students to explore their interests, thereby nurturing self-efficacy and perseverance (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Duckworth, 2016; McCullough et al., 2019).

Support systems, including teachers' mentorship and peers' solidarity, are critical factors in late bloomers' academic journeys. Teachers impart knowledge and provide crucial emotional support and guidance that significantly impact students' academic and emotional well-being (Karabenick & Sharma, 2019; Rimpela et al., 2020). Institutions should prioritize ongoing professional development for educators to enhance their pedagogical skills and emotional intelligence, fostering inclusive and supportive learning environments.

Based on these findings, specific recommendations can be proposed to support late bloomers effectively. First, personalized support programs should be developed to address common academic challenges identified among late bloomers, incorporating tailored tutoring, adaptive technologies, and peer-assisted study groups. Second, intrinsic motivation should be promoted through reflective practices and growth mindset principles, encouraging students to find personal meaning and purpose in their academic pursuits. Third, enhanced teacher training is essential to equip educators with the skills to provide meaningful mentorship and create supportive classroom environments.

Additionally, supportive peer networks should be facilitated to enable students to build relationships with peers who share academic goals and values. Collaborative learning and mutual encouragement among students can significantly enhance motivation and academic achievement. Lastly, integrating passion-driven learning opportunities into the curriculum can further engage students by allowing them to explore and integrate their interests into academic activities.

Through implementing these recommendations, educators and institutions can create a supportive ecosystem that empowers late bloomers to overcome challenges, leverage their strengths, and achieve academic success. Embracing a holistic approach that addresses setbacks, nurtures effective coping mechanisms, and strengthens support systems will benefit late bloomers and enrich the educational experience for all students. Ultimately, these efforts foster a resilient, motivated, and empowered student body prepared to thrive in academic and personal endeavors.

REFERENCES

Acharya, B. R. (2019). Factors affecting difficulties in learning mathematics by mathematics learners. International Journal of Elementary Education, 6(2), 8. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijeedu.20170602.11

Ancheta, O. J., & Casem, R. Q. (2024). Navigating Educational Crossroads: An In-Depth Analysis of the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPED) Program in Santol, La Union, Philippines. Diversitas Journal, 9(2). https://doi.org/10.48017/dj.v9i2.2998

Ancheta, O. O. Jr., & Ochoco, C. A. E. (2023). Mother tongue instruction in the laboratory elementary schools from the pupils' viewpoint. Journal of Educational Theory and Teaching, 14(6). https://doi.org/10.47750/jett.2023.14.06.002

Audet, L. (n.d.-b). Who are struggling learners? https://blog.heinemann.com/who-are-struggling-learners

Ba, M. R. C. (2023, September 12). What is Coping Theory? Definition & Worksheets. PositivePsychology.com. https://positivepsychology.com/coping-theory/

Bhat, A. (2023, August 29). Types of interviews in research and methods. QuestionPro. https://www.questionpro.com/blog/types-of-interviews/

PASCUA, Cristel Mae R. [1]; TANILON, April D. [2]; CARIAGA , Joylyn M. [3], RIVERA , Katrina C. [4], LOPEZ, Monica L. [5] SENA, Sofia Marie N. [6], ANCHETA, Oscar JR. O.[7]

Blackburn, S. (2023, November 20). Understanding the Social Support Theory - Coach Foundation. Coach Foundation. https://coachfoundation.com/blog/social-support-theory/

Brooks, D. (2019). The Second Mountain: The Quest for a Moral Life. Random House.

Cabello, C. Bacong, J., Encabo, C.M., & Limana J. M (2023). The High School Students' Struggles and Challenges in Mathematics: A Qualitative Inquiry. https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=22258

Creswell, J. W. (2013). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

Deci & Ryan, A. (2019, December 6). Learning Performance.: Why Grit theory is important for success. https://learningperformance.com/why-grit-theory-is-important-for-success/

Filade, B. A., Bello, A. A., Uwaoma, C. O., Anwanane, B. B., & Nwangburka, (2019). Peer group influence on academic performance of undergraduate students in Babcock University, Ogun State. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1221210

Guthrie, M. F., Marshall, P. H., Hendrick, S. S., Hendrick, C., & Logue, E. (2019). Human

Kaufman, S. B. (2020). Transcend The New Science of Self-Actualization. TarcherPerigee.

Love Styles and Attitudes toward Pets. Anthrozoös, 31(1), 41–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/08927936.2018.1406200

Hayat, A. A., Shateri, K., Amini, M., & Shokrpour, N. (2020). Relationships between academic self-efficacy, learning-related emotions, and metacognitive learning strategies with academic performance in medical students: a structural equation model. BMC Medical Education, 20(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-020-01995-9

Jordan, N. (n.d.). Fractions Learning in Children with Mathematics Difficulties. Fractions Learning in Children with Mathematics Difficulties. https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED598359.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjck8_uvraGAxXXTmwGHWUEAT8QFnoECBwQAQ&usg=AOvVaw39gHOmtFbnoTuZniyNm8c3

Jr Ancheta, O. (2024). Unveiling Excellence: A Holistic Evaluation of the Summer Enrichment Program at Laboratory Elementary School, DMMMSU-MLUC, Philippines. Diversitas Journal, 9(1), 530–549. https://doi.org/10.48017/dj.v9i1.2890

Karaberick, & Sharma. (2019). The Relationship between teacher support and Students' Academic Emotions: A Meta-Analysis. The Relationship Between Teacher Support and Students' Academic Emotions: A Meta-Analysis. https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.02288/full

Karlgaard, R. (2019, May). Late Bloomers: What it means to be a late bloomer in today's world of early success - late bloomers. Late Bloomers. https://www.latebloomer.com/what-it-means-to-be-a-late-bloomer-in-todays-world-of-early-success/

Kempis, H. R., Enriquez, M., Harochoc, J., Huevia, S. C., Indad, S. A., & Mirasol, M. (2020, April 1) (n.d.). ProblemsEncountered by Grade 12 HUMSS Strand Students on their Creative Writing Subject in Bestlink College of the Philippines: Basis for Proposed Guidelines. https://ojs.aaresearchindex.com/index.php/aasgbcpjmra/article/view/2643

Klang, N., Karlsson, N., Kilborn, W., Eriksson, P., & Karlberg, M. (2021). Mathematical Problem-Solving Through Cooperative Learning—The Importance of Peer Acceptance and Friendships. Mathematical Problem-Solving Through Cooperative Learning—The Importance of Peer Acceptance and Friendships. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.710296

Langoban, M. (2020). What Makes Mathematics Difficult as a Subject for Most Students in Higher Education? ResearchGate.https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342888714_What_Makes_Mathematics_Difficult_as_a_Subject_for_most_Students_in_Higher_Education

Magazine, P. (2023, December 27). The psychology of animal lovers. Psychology Magazine | Mental Health Magazine | Psychology Magazine | Self-Help Magazine. https://www.psychologs.com/the-psychology-of-animal-lovers/?amp=1

Mba, C. M. P. (2023, September 22). Resilience Theory: A summary of the research (PDF). PositivePsychology.com. https://positivepsychology.com/resilience-theory/

Margolis, H., & Mccabe, P. P. (2006). Improving Self-Efficacy and Motivation. Intervention in School and Clinic, 41(4), 218–227. https://doi.org/10.1177/10534512060410040401

McCullough, A., Ruehrdanz, A., Garthe, R., Hellman, C., & O'Haire, M. (2021). Measuring classroom pets' social, behavioral, and academic effects on third and Fourth-Grade students. Human-Animal Interactions Bulletin. https://doi.org/10.1079/hai.2021.0023

Mcleod, S., PhD. (2023). Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and Scaffolding Theory. Simply Psychology. https://www.simplypsychology.org/zone-of-proximal-development.html

MSc, O. G. (2023). Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Simply Psychology. https://www.simplypsychology.org/bronfenbrenner.html

Munir, J., Faiza, M., Jamal, B., Daud, S., & Iqbal, K. (2023). The impact of socioeconomic status on academic achievement. Journal of Social Sciences Review, 3(2), 695–705. https://doi.org/10.54183/jssr.v3i2.308

PASCUA, Cristel Mae R. [1]; TANILON, April D. [2]; CARIAGA , Joylyn M. [3], RIVERA , Katrina C. [4], LOPEZ, Monica L. [5], SENA, Sofia Marie N. [6], ANCHETA, Oscar JR. O.[7]

Neubauer, B., Witkop, C. T., & Varpio, L. (2019). How phenomenology can help us learn from the experiences of others. Perspectives on Medical Education, 8(2), 90–97. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-019-0509-2

Rimpela, A., Kinnunen, J. M., Lindfors, P., Soto, V. E., Salmela-Aro, K., Perelman, J., Federico, B., & Lorant, V. (2020). Academic Well-Being and Structural characteristics of peer networks in school. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health/International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17(2848. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17082848

Robinson, A. (2022, April 13). Early Childhood Theories: Albert Bandura. Uncommon

Robinson, K. (2009). The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything. Penguin Books.

Rose, T. (2016). The End of Average: How We Succeed in a World That Values Sameness. HarperOne.

Sense Parenting with Allana Robinson. https://www.allanarobinson.com/early-childhood-theories-albert-bandura/

Steinmayr, R., Weidinger, A. F., Schwinger, M., & Spinath, B. (2019). The importance of students' motivation for academic achievement—Replicating and extending previous findings. Frontiers in Psychology, 10, Article 1730. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01730

Smith, Munir, J., Faiza, M., Jamal, B., Daud, S., & Iqbal, K. 2023. The impact of socioeconomic status on academic achievement. Journal of Social Sciences Review, 3(2), 695–705. https://doi.org/10.54183/jssr.v3i2.308

Souza, R. (2023, October 15). Teachers: the architects of the future. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/teachers-architects-future-ricardo-souza

Staff, C., & Staff, C. (2021, September 1). Education issues in the Philippines: the ongoing struggle. ChildHope Philippines. https://childhope.org.ph/education-issues-in-the-philippines/

Strobel, K. (2023, October 5). Developing a growth mindset for success | Strobel Education. Strobel Education. https://strobeleducation.com/blog/developing-a-growth-mindset-for-success/

St-Yves, M. H. Fresston, C. Jacques, C. Robitaille, (2019). Love of animals and interpersonal affectionate behavior. Psychological Reports, 67(3_suppl), 1067–1075. https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1990.67.3f.1067

SupaduDev. (2023, March 20). What is grit, and why is it important? New Harbinger Publications, Inc. https://www.newharbinger.com/blog/self-help/what-is-grit-and-why-is-it-important

Tejeda, V. (2023, October 30). How to transcribe audio files to text in 8 easy steps. Descript. https://www.descript.com/blog/article/how-to-transcribe-audio-files#:~:text=Audio%20transcription%20is%20the%20process,accessible%20and%20easy%20to%20analyze

UNESCO. (2020). Global education monitoring report 2020: Inclusion and education: All means all. UNESCO Publishing.

Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Bondas, T. (2019). Thematic Analysis: Content and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. Nursing & Health Sciences, 15(3), 398–405. https://doi.org/10.1111/nhs.12048

Wang, J., Zhou, C., Song, Q., & Xu, F. (2023). The Relationship between teacher support and positive emotions in Chinese higher vocational students: Multiple mediating effects of procrastination behavior and interpersonal assistance. Frontiers in Psychology, p. 14.