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Outlining Placid Involvements: Understanding the Lived Experiences of Philippine School Doha Alumni Studying Abroad

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Abstract: Background: ***As Philippine School Doha alumni move on and open another chapter in life, they face challenges and new experiences. They may indulge themselves in a new type of environment of rebuilding one's identity abroad.*** **Method:** ***The qualitative paper follows the phenomenological research design to understand the lived experiences and identity development of PSD alumni studying abroad. The necessary data was gathered from a semi-structured interview which was derived from the central question of the study "How do PSD graduates manage their education embracing an international setup?" Four themes were derived and classified that were necessary to make the simulacrum.*** **Findings:** ***It was discovered that internal and external aspects and changes affect one's ability to adapt to the international setting. Specifically, homesickness, culture, accent, and language barriers are some factors that affect the process of adaptation. The participants emphasized that the workload they experience in the chosen country is more practical and directed on their selected course. Hence, students mostly initiate interaction between both parties.*** **Conclusion:** ***These PSD alumni pursued tertiary education abroad to explore and discover opportunities. Obstacles were encountered due to their unfamiliarity with their reality of venturing into a new chapter of life as a student. Overall, their experience has affected their lifestyle, mental and emotional health, learning outcomes, and relations.*** **Recommendation:** ***This paper suggests tackling a larger population of participants from different fields of college courses to establish the accuracy of the data gathered. They also recommend further investigation regarding the other aspects that affect one's process of acculturating; and lifestyles practiced abroad, such as the cost of living, economic status, and peers.***
Keywords: Acculturation, Student Resilience, Socio-Cultural Barriers, Cultural Sensitivity, Student Migration, Overseas Education

I. INTRODUCTION

Moving from different land to another is a task that requires vigor and perseverance. As life slowly blossoms, opening a new beginning seems so challenging. Migration, as a social construct, coexists with idealisms through growth and stability. The modern era has come to terms with the eager need to sustain life in more ways than one. Migration is a case that caters to both the needs of the migrant and the sustainability of a country.

Thet (2014) found that pull factors exist because developed countries have the upper hand as they dominate third-world countries. Developed countries now have more experience in economic growth and stability, Castelli (2018). Further, Davin (1999) stated, "intentions vary as this concept may be temporary or permanent." As economic depletion happens in several countries around the globe, migration offers a different kind of solution to people who believe that there are better opportunities than what they have. Factors that include poverty and lack of opportunity in their own country led them to consider other countries. Therefore, they pull the factors that push them to want a better lifestyle because general beneficial factors outweigh the circumstances of leaving their hometown.

Migrating to another country becomes a choice due to the need for a better lifestyle. According to Tabuga (2018), "the determination that drives Overseas Filipino Workers to leave their home country is largely caused by the state of the economy in the country. "The economy plays an immense role in the choice of a foreign land. For this reason, Filipinos often choose a country that flourishes economically with Qatar as an example. They choose a country that can sustain the life they want to offer their families. Besides, Nafi (2013) cited that "Qatar has a huge possibility of striving and prospering through its national and natural outputs."

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Their vast reservoir of natural oil and gas has led to the skyrocket of their economic development, making this the backbone of their economy. Qatar's capability of catering to migrants gives Overseas Filipino workers a favorable opportunity to voyage into the country which benefits both the migrant worker and Qatar's economy. Filipinos have chosen to migrate to Qatar since they can visualize the quality of life the country can give.

Accordingly, educational institutions were established to suffice the educational needs of children who go along with their parents who temporarily work overseas. These establishments are controlled by and are required to follow the curriculum under their nations' ministry education system. Specifically, in 2000, the Commission on Filipino Overseas in the Manual of Policies and Regulations (MOPAR) defined Philippine School Overseas (PSOs) in Article 1: Section 5 as "an educational institution operating outside the Philippines, which may be fully or partly owned by Filipinos or managed and operated by Filipinos and implementing the basic education curriculum of the Department of Education (DepEd)." PSOs are instituted to cater to educational needs and make basic education accessible to Filipinos studying overseas. Further, this initiative narrows the educational and socioeconomic gap of Filipinos in the world. Moreover, the global community has focused on issues regarding poverty alleviation and human development (Okabe, 2013).

Thus, the implementation of the K to 12 program was facilitated to decongest the curriculum and prepare students for higher education and labor. Caplan (2018) stated that "if education merely certifies labor quality, society would be better off if we all got less." The education system of today is flawed and so the program poses various setbacks. Particularly, it extends the years of tertiary education hence increasing the school leaving age and length of the school cycle. It poses funding constraints and a shortage of input such as school materials and staff. Lastly, this investment of time and effort poses a delay in the economy. Despite the complications, the K to 12 programs were said to be the most comprehensive basic education initiative since a century ago (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2012). PSOs aims to provide quality Philippine education despite the distance and differences in nature. As a result, similarities in the education system ease the process of reintegrating other education systems to Filipinos overseas.

Consequently, Philippine School Doha (PSD) is an educational establishment that was founded on October 3 of 1992 to cater basic education to Filipino children in the State of Qatar (Philippine School Doha, 2019). The school's philosophy "Servitium et Excellentiam" encourages the growth and development of globally competitive graduates possessing intrinsic morals and critical reasoning. Van Rooij et al. (2017) suggested a positive academic environment and the ability to handle complex and volume of workload determines a student's persistence in performing well and pursuing through the years (751). Their method and process of delivering quality education specialize in students' performance. Hence, the environment hones the skills and talents of the students. The environment promotes a healthy competition that sharpens one's mastery of skills and concepts and prepares one to become a global citizen.

The critical discernment of choosing which universities to attend is one of the most challenging experiences a high school student must go through. According to Jianvittayakit (2012), "the factors that affect international students' determining processes are varied for the reason that it is a union of push and pull factors urging students to study abroad." Therefore, there are different factors that are affecting the decisions of high school graduates on where to continue their education. Usually, the students of Philippine School Doha go back to their home country, the Philippines, or stay in Qatar to continue their college studies. The alumni prepare for their college transition by taking several entrance exams from different universities. Duncheon (2018) mentioned that "There is a significance of the classes, grades, and scores you had in high school." This is to check if the student is fit for the university they are applying to. This gives students different difficulties they might encounter along the way. After deciding, the student will go to their college facing unfamiliarity where adapting to this environment is a necessity. The alumni are then provided with different programs and seminars that could help the student in adjusting. "First-year experience programs target intervention after the transition to university to help improve student adaptation to the university environment" (Permzadian & Credé, 2016). This could benefit the students in easily adapting to the environment they are newly exposed to. Moreover, Sevinc and Gezir (2016) describe that "Shifting period as a change and adaptation method joined by important problems and stresses for growing adults to fulfil the personal demands of the new educational and social environment." Entering college and universities prepares students for experiencing more difficulties to satisfy their goals soon fully in the future. The research study focused on understanding the lived experiences and insights of PSD alumni studying tertiary education abroad. Excluding Qatar and the Philippines, the term "abroad" comprises foreign countries wherein PSD alumni take their college education. Specifically, the participants who qualified were studying in countries the United States of America, Australia, Georgia, and Malaysia. Further, this phenomenological study brought out insights of the participants regarding the new environment and culture they see daily, the emotional hindrances they encountered while adjusting, the academic institution they attend, and the social companions they found abroad.

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Various factors can impede or benefit the ability to adapt to a new set of communities and cultures. Most of the time, the span of stay in a new culture affects their adaptation to a once foreign setting, Miglietta and Tartaglia (2008). Having that said, Cultural Apprehension and Linguistic Competence are also said to have a significant effect. According to Hofstede (2001), communication competence relies on a set of attributes that can be taught and learned over time. Through studying the distinct experiences when it comes to moving into a new setting, the researchers have the chance to learn the challenges and opportunities that they encounter along the way.

Living in a time where people perceive abroad as a diverse way to learn and experience new opportunities. Those experiencing multiple re-entries, whether in the form of transnational migration or numerous sojourns, report experiencing a compounded sense of confusion with their place in the world (Young et al., 2014, p. 177). Stating its phenomenon, there are mere challenges that migrant students encounter. The essence of the Lebenswelt of Philippine School Doha (PSD) Alumni studying abroad is to gain an understanding of their experiences and greatest challenges when it comes to studying abroad, allowing individuals to recognize the challenges they may face in the process of migrating abroad for their education. This research is expected to go beyond the understanding of incoming Philippine School Doha Alumni who choose to study abroad in terms of learning and delving further into the preparations and adjustments they must do to have a head start in the future.

II. METHOD

A. Research Design

The approach that was used in the study was a qualitative design, specifically phenomenology since the researchers aim to understand the lived experiences and perspectives of participants. “Qualitative methods are typically used for providing an in-depth understanding of the research issues that embraces the perspectives of the study population and the context in which they live (Hennik et al, 2020, 11).” While, phenomenology focuses on “understanding the essence of the experience (Creswell, 2013, 78).” Inductive reasoning was also utilized to form themes from the collected data. Sauce and Matzel (2017) stated, “inductive reasoning involves cases where categories are formed based on the observations that are made.”

The eight chosen participants, which were selected based on certain criteria, were interviewed with the guide questions to extract the necessary information that formed four themes with two sub-themes each. The researchers focused on analyzing the articulated words of the PSD alumni studying abroad through in-depth interviews.

B. Research Locus and Sample

The research study was conducted at Philippine School Doha, Qatar. This educational institution was founded on October 3, 1992, and it is the leading basic institution in Qatar. It has been continuously serving overseas Filipino workers and students in Qatar. It also has been producing research-adept learners and giving the best quality of education with the standards of the K-12 curriculum of the home country.



Figure 1: Map of Qatar

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Figure 2: Location of Philippine School Doha (PSD)

The researchers used a criterion to select the eight participants who partook in the study. The following is the criteria used to choose the PSD alumni studying abroad including (1) the participants must be from 1st to 4th-year college students; (2) they should be currently residing in the chosen country for more than five months; (3) they are aged 18 and over; (4) they studied in Philippine School Doha for two or more years; (5) studying in a foreign country excluding Qatar and the Philippines.

C. Data Collection and Ethical Consideration

The researchers formulated one central question with three sub-questions comprising twenty-five developmental questions used in the study. The essential data was obtained through a robotfoto and a semi-structured interview including the twenty-five guide questions that were validated by three esteemed validators. In fact, De Guzman et al. (2010) noted that the robotfoto, "provides the cartographic sketch of the subjects." In truth, the robotfoto is primarily used to gather the participants' demographic sketches, namely the years of undertaking education in Philippine School Doha located in Qatar, the country they are currently residing in, and the educational institution they are currently attending. Preceding the interview, coordinating, and scheduling with the participants were made possible through email and messaging platforms. The video conferencing platform, Zoom, was used to conduct the interview. It commenced with the researchers presenting the study being conducted, and seeking the participant's vital information such as name, age, years of studying in Philippine School Doha (PSD), the country they are residing in, and educational attainment in the chosen educational institution. After the introductory statements, the researchers proceeded to ask the twenty-five guide questions. Subsequently, the researchers then transcribed verbatim using the recorded responses of the participants.

During the process of the interview, the researchers asked for permission to record and assured the participants of the confidentiality of their identities. The research protocol was followed throughout the study as the researchers respectfully sought the participant's approval. The participants were oriented about the details of the process to inform them about the study and its purpose.

D. Data Analysis

The researchers used an inductive approach in developing themes to thoroughly analyze the collected data which included: (1) making of emic transcription by listening comprehensively to the recorded responses of the participants and transcribing it word-per-word; (2) converting the transcription from emic to etic to showcase the naive understanding of the researchers regarding the participants' responses; (3) compiling the gathered raw data through the cool analysis; (4) summarizing and organizing the responses found in the cool analysis based on the responses' degree of likeness using the dendrogram; (5) and making a visual representation of the findings via the simulacrum. The second level of data analysis is also performed during the collection of data. This consists of formulating major themes and sub-themes. The formulated themes are related to the topic in such ways that these themes are the experiences and challenges of the PSD alumni migrating to a new set of environments. In terms of changes and adjustments, moving into another country to study will enable you to experience a lot of changes such as (1) Educational Adjustments; (2) Social Adaptations; (3) Cultural Transitions; (4) Emotional Alterations. Savicki and Cooley (2011) stated that "people who are introduced to a new culture face a variety of challenges in adjusting and adapting to it. Adjustment demands can occur on several different levels for those who remain in touch with that culture over time, such as students who study abroad". This shows the different changes and experiences present that the students have to face when moving abroad.

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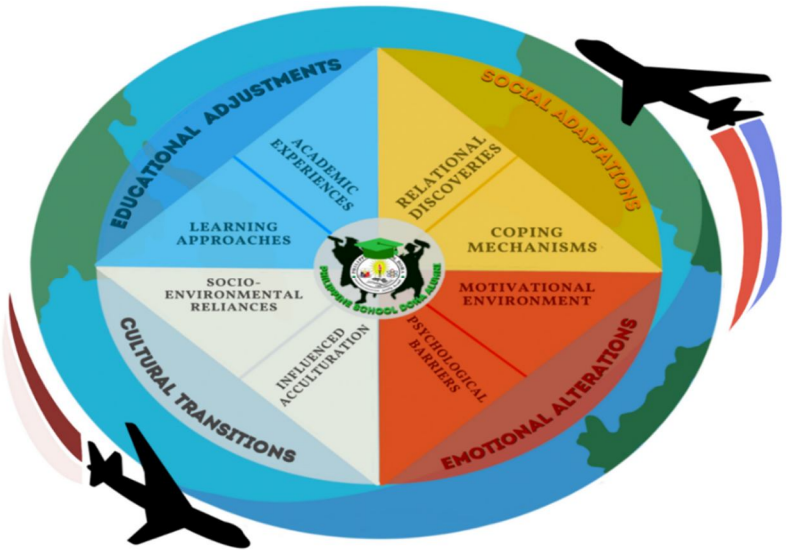


Figure 3: Simulacrum Interrelated Experiences of the PSD Alumni Studying Abroad

III. FINDINGS

This phenomenological study describes the struggles and adjustment of Philippine School Doha alumni as they start a new academic journey abroad. Relative to the central question: "How do PSD graduates manage their education embracing an international setup?" this study focused on the specific question: "What common difficulties do Philippine School Doha graduates experience after moving to another country?" More so, choosing to study in a foreign land where everything is unfamiliar after being accustomed to the customs and traditions of another country, these PSD alumni are challenged to defy odds in a different land. Considering that tertiary education poses a new set of tests and trials, the PSD alumni are shaped with profound vital skills and competencies that enable them to face the world as competent individuals.

Figure 3 displays the simulacrum focused on four major themes: educational adjustment, social adaptation, emotional alterations, and cultural transitions. These themes highlight the lived experiences of PSD alumni studying abroad and the processes one has to undergo while maintaining placidity in life. The airplanes represent a migration from Qatar to another country carrying a proud Filipino identity. The colors of the aircraft symbolize migration from Qatar to another country abroad. Hence, the colors of the airplane's tracks, signifying the countries excluding Qatar and the Philippines. Next, the Earth in the background symbolizes the PSD alumni located internationally. Lastly, the green graduation cap denotes the PSD alumni.

A. Educational Adjustments

Adjusting from one educational curriculum to another is relatively difficult, especially if it is vastly different from the accustomed curricula and if the alumni do not have any background with the courses involved. Entering a college especially in a new environment poses challenges to adjust to the learning styles integrated by their university and the utilized educational system of the country. These Philippine School Doha (PSD) alumni experienced hardships in their preparations as well as studying throughout their academic year.

These alumni chose to pursue college education abroad. It is for this reason that there are more opportunities to be grabbed rather than studying in the Philippines and Qatar. It also depends on the degree they are studying. Some alumni also moved abroad because of the affordability of the university they are attending. Some participants mentioned that:

"I feel like having a degree outside Qatar or the Philippines would give me a bit more opportunities, as well as it would look like I have higher standards compared to others." P2

"I chose to study in Malaysia because the tuition fee is cheaper compared to Qatar. I wanted to experience studying abroad again, not in Qatar nor in the Philippines. Based on the university fair back then, I was interested in studying in APU because their graduates' employability rate was high." P1

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"I chose to study abroad mainly because of the opportunities that studying there poses but also mostly because of self-growth for a change. I've been in Qatar for so long that I thought that it was time for a change. Graduating in high school means that you just became an adult because everybody is almost 18 and it's the time for new beginnings and a fresh start. P3
"I chose to study here because it is affordable. In the medicine course I am taking, I will be taking 6 years rather than 10 years to graduate. My parents are supportive of my decision to study here in this wonderful environment." P5

B. Academic Experiences

Prior to entering college, students must get through high school first. They must get high grades and earn a lot of extra-curricular activities to prepare for their college requirements. In some universities, their previous school performance takes a big part in order to get admitted to their college. The participants have said that their academic performance was fine. Some have said that they did not take their high school studies seriously. Some alumni have expressed that:

"I was not taking my studies seriously during my time in PSD. I was not putting much effort, but I would still get decent grades. Now, I am taking my studies seriously. It is an improvement compared to my time in PSD." P1
"My academic performance in the PSD setting was not bad, it was great." P3
"It was great. I belong to the pilot class for most of my years of study in PSD, and I took a STEM class in my senior high school." P8

Preparations were conducted in order to be admitted into that certain university the alumnus is entering. The first step was to research the country and university they are applying to. They also organized documents as well as took different types of exams as a requirement in their college or university. They also prepared themselves physically, emotionally and mentally as they enter a new chapter of their life. Some participants stated that:

"I visited the university a year before starting my studies. I also read through the website and familiarized myself with the faculty in my course. I basically read ahead, and I also asked the international student adviser my questions that helped me have a head start before starting my studies." P7
"I must get consistent and high grades in PSD. I took the SAT, ACT and IELTS that were not required here, but it was in other universities I applied to. Necessities like passport copy, QID, transfer of records and photocopy that should be translated and preparing yourself emotionally, physically, and mentally." P4
"Aside from packing, it's just all about mental and emotional preparation. You must put yourself in that mental state that everything is going to be different now. Other people get overwhelmed by everything happening at once." P3
"My family and I researched about the new environment and the university. My dad contacted the agent who accompanied us during our stay and explained the basic parts and system in Georgia." P5
"A year before we went here, we checked all the opportunities I had like what high school I would go to until fourth year high school. When my parents and I liked it, we moved here." P6

As they enter college, they experience a lot of struggles and obstacles in their new educational setting. This is very evident especially when it is their first time in that country. The schoolmates as well as the faculties of their certain universities helped them to cope and adapt to the new environment. Learning from themselves was also done by the alumni when they first moved abroad. A participant answered that:

"At first, I was struggling, having no background and experience in coding and programming. I was able to get decent grades by communicating with friends and lecturers, and self-learning." P1

Moreover, every country has its own educational system wherein students must adjust to it with the help of the things they learned from their alma mater. Philippine School Doha (PSD) has been readying its students for global competence wherein students are trained to manage and deal with the workload in preparation for their college years. This helped the alumni in adjusting to the university they are studying in abroad. A participant enunciated that:

"It helped me to adapt to the new learning environment because PSD is more strenuous. We are trained to handle a lot of stuff and when I first got here, it was not as challenging as I thought it would be because PSD has already prepared me to handle the stress or the workload." P3
"PSD has a more challenging learning environment with high competition. Because of this exposure, I was able to cope with the activities here in my university. I was wonderfully comfortable in recitation and group reports." P5

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C. Learning Approaches

There is a wide difference between the learning environment abroad and Qatar. Each country has its own academic system. The educational system Philippine School Doha (PSD) has been utilizing the curriculum incorporated in the Philippines which is the K-12 Curriculum. Thus, this makes the alumni see the differences between the educational system they are used to and the education system of the university they applied to.

Being a college student also has a great impact on the variation of the academic system. PSD is said to have a lot more workloads and extracurricular activities than in the college international setting wherein students are only allowed to focus on their courses. Participants have answered that:

"PSD's education system follows the Philippine curriculum. The minimum years for a bachelor's degree take 4 to 5 years, while it takes 2.5 years in Australia. While for a diploma, it only takes six months." P8

"PSD follows the Philippine's curriculum where all the subjects are required. Meanwhile, the United States follows the American curriculum which offers its students freedom to choose their courses.' P6

"In Australia, we have a block mode wherein you only study one subject per month so that we can focus on that subject rather than having multiple subjects per semester." P2

"PSD's education system gives more pressure to students, plus a lot of extra activities and lessons to take. In university, students only take units related to their courses. We are limited to only four assessments per unit. Skills wise, PSD's education system helped me attain skills I can apply in university." P7

Philippine School Doha (PSD) has a very different approach when it comes to their way of teaching students. Universities have more challenging ways for students to learn while PSD are thorough and interaction between the teacher and students has always been observed. According to two participants:

"PSD's teaching style is interactive because of the activities done. In my school, it is more on self-studying, so it was difficult for me. We need to devote our time and effort to make a remark." P5

"The teaching style in PSD is more engaging compared to the international setting. The teachers are very hands-on with how they teach, and we can clearly see that the teachers in PSD want you to learn something and want you to become someone." P3

In addition, alumni have mentioned that Philippine School Doha (PSD) are more centered on students doing extracurricular activities as well as balancing their studies. Their high school prepared their students first in such a way that their curriculum let their students learn more about what career they want to get in the future before going to college. An alumnus has enunciated that:

"PSD focuses more on academics and extracurricular activities. They have these career training subjects, and you take it all before you get to decide one for the rest of your study. In Australia, we get to choose one, and it counts separately with academic and extracurricular activities." P8

Lastly, Philippine School Doha (PSD) has helped some alumni in coping and managing the stress they are receiving from their respective universities since the curriculum they are utilizing is more challenging than in the international setting. PSD taught students how to handle their stress and prioritize tasks that need to be done. This contributed to adapting to the international setting sooner. A participant has said that:

"Yes, because the Philippine curriculum is much more strenuous and more advanced than international schools in terms of the lessons being taught and other stuff such as stress management." P3

"Zes, it helped me a lot. Philippine School Doha has a challenging environment compared to my university." P5

D. Social Adaptations

Adapting to a different country alone after being used to the company of one's family and friends is heartbreaking. It is alienating and lonesome for the most part setting foot in a place of other nationalities.

Entering college draws multiple challenges, primarily when it comes to socializing as it is the first step that encourages the PSD alumni to move forward.

Further, the PSD alumni's' cultural and educational background isn't tailored to the adopted country. And so, it was discovered that they encountered social changes that impede their self-confidence and had to find ways to overcome their social challenges.

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E. Coping Mechanisms

Moving to a foreign nation posed several adjustments such as long-distance relationships, accent and language barriers, socializing and building new relationships. It was discovered that the PSD alumni either constantly communicated with their families in Qatar via social media platforms to battle homesickness. They relied on their relatives and friends living in the same country to cope with their culture shock and to be acquainted with the new responsibilities they now have to shoulder. All in all, they also explored around to make the unfamiliar, familiar. They stated that:

"Living in the technological age, we can easily reach and communicate using our phones. I call my parents day and night so we can update each other on the ongoings with me in Malaysia and there in Qatar. This way we would not feel homesick." P1

"During my first year I was living with my parents and they were the ones who acted as my support system, after that I adjusted with the use of my technology and the help of my relatives." P6

"My parents taught me independence and I have experienced going to at least 6 schools as of now. We message and call each other to cope up with the distance and regularly update them on the ongoings here. My roommate also helps me." P5

"Going outside and exploring the city by myself was my coping mechanism so that I don't feel isolated when I'm home or just in my room." She added, "Since I miss my family, I would video call them every day to not feel homesick, and when I can't call them, I go out with friends and distract myself. I also find different hobbies that I can do like reading books, drawing, or singing." P2

"I think it is essential to connect yourself with other people. Having a group of people helps with coping up with homesickness." P7

"It took me a lot of time to adjust. My aunt was the only one who accompanied me to adjust to the country. They gave me advice at the university and with working with other people. I became homesick, but I got used to it." P8

Another situation the alumni encountered was adapting to international education, a setting with which they are unfamiliar. Mental and physical preparations were made to cope with their transitioning smoother. Further, the alumni equipped themselves with an optimistic mindset. The participant stated that:

"I just had to go for it. At first, I was very reserved, but I then realized that I must indulge myself with the education system here because I needed to grow and learn. I had to embrace it and experience it as well." P7

"It is all in the mindset. You really must face every challenge in life because you wanted this decision to study abroad. You must adjust since your family is not here, but it will help you grow and mature as a person. You will also get to know yourself more because you live on your own now." P4

"The most important thing is yourself. Making that new place your new home and finding friends or a community that you get along with would make you feel like you're not alienated in the new place and will make adjusting a lot easier." P3

F. Relational Discoveries

In the new environment, the PSD alumni live in another international setting where people of different nationalities reside. As they delved into the unfamiliar land, they continued to meet new people building new relationships, discovering more and more about each other. Making friends, learning about the diverse cultures, feeling at home within the Filipino community present, staying connected with family, asking for help from others, relying on God, strengthening an optimistic mindset, and opening oneself to self-discovery all led to the positive development in adapting. The participants attested that:

"Since our university is multicultural, everyone is in the same situation as me living away from their families. We chose to interact to learn about each other and our culture. I would say that this university is preparing me to become a global citizen since they host events showcasing each other's culture and traditions." He added, "I would join available events and extracurricular activities. I usually spend my time socializing and meeting different kinds of people." P1

"By making friends with differing cultural backgrounds, I was able to broaden my horizons on their culture." P6

"The pandemic posed uncertainties, but I was able to adapt through my friends, my community, and myself. I found friends who I can talk to about my problems and hang out. There is also a Filipino community that felt homey. And myself where I tuned my mindset about the place, basically mental preparation." He also stated, "In addition, PSD helped me prepare academically, and some personal environment helped to adjust to the international setting. My parents were supportive and made me feel that I made the right decision. It is just a lot of mental preparation and people having your back." P3

"Most of my roommates are Filipinos, and they helped me adapt to the international setting. My aunts also helped me in adjusting, especially to the events, culture, and laws." P8

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"My friends, especially my best friend who came with me from Qatar since we both know what we are going through with cultures and people." P2
"My roommate helped me a lot and I have a group of friends that have a positive impact on me. They helped me understand and pass some of my subjects." She added, "Our agent is very accommodating. He helped us adjust to the country and navigate the city easier." P5
"Having someone on the same boat helped me and guided me with decision making and with navigation through uni." P7

Needless to say, difficulties were encountered entering a new chapter in life. They were coping by keeping in touch with their loved ones and God. And some alumni chose to condition their minds with determination in order to excel and accept their reality. The participants expressed that:
"I just talk it out. I talk to my parents and relatives whenever I'm struggling, and they can understand and cheer me up." P6
"It is God and a friend of mine. It is extremely hard like in the first days you tend to cry since you feel lonely and far away from your family and that will also affect the way you study so you really must cope up faster." She also mentioned, "A proper mindset would do because when you chose being away from your family and living independently. It's like a twin resisting and they all come together so therefore you all have to embrace and face them step by step." P4
"I just had to go for it. At first, I was very reserved, but I then realized that I must indulge myself with the education system here because I needed to grow and learn. I had to embrace it and experience it as well." P7
"At first, I was shy to talk to people because of their different accents and I felt conscious about having that Filipino accent. To adapt, I started with friends and built my way up to talking to strangers, and now I started to be more confident in speaking in English than I did before." P2

Further, aside from the people in their lives, some alumni said that they alleviate stress by praying and entrusting their situation to God. In this way, they found reassurance and were able to handle stress and load better. The alumni stated that:
"When I wake up, I pray, and I play these Christian or worship songs to give me a good vibe and to remember how God loves us. We just must fight until this day is done." P4
"I pray and rely on God when I'm feeling stressed out. It helps me remember that I have a family who supports me. My family and friends encourage me to do my best when it comes to studying." P5

The participants realized numerous things when they migrated to a different country. Building relationships and bonds helped stabilize their mental and emotional well-being as they were able to cope easier. Some concluded that the relationships they have formed and who they are now wouldn't be the same if they migrated earlier.
"I do not have any regrets because of the relationships and experiences I had. I feel like if I came earlier, I would not perform the same as in PSD with high academic expectations of their students." P2
"I guess not, by that time, by that age you must live independently away from your family, and I guess I am not that ready yet." P4
"I would say no because even if it was tough to study being in a Philippine school, I still ended up benefiting from it. Whatever skills I learned in high school allowed me to become more prepared for university." P7
"I do not think it would have been better if I went abroad earlier to study. I went here when I was 18, and I am independent and emotionally stable. If I went earlier, I would not have a lot of financial stability and the same confidence." P8

On the other hand, some participants stated that it would have been better if they migrated earlier due to certain factors, such as having more time to adjust to the foreign country, earning a degree, or qualifying to work. The alumni stated that:
"Maybe it would have been better so that you could get used to everything." P2
"I have thought about it and I would probably have done better if I studied here during my 3rd year of high school." P6
"I wasted several years since I already graduated in fourth year before going to senior high school. I would have been able to save time since senior high is not required in Malaysia. Perhaps, I could have studied for a degree. By now, I probably would have graduated and been working already." P1

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However, generally speaking, a participant declared their insight that:
"There would be no other perfect time than graduating from high school because it is just about starting new beginnings. And everybody is searching for a new life purpose in their life and that's just the perfect time to move alone. It's perfect if you're somebody who longs for change or wanted to be in a new environment and see more of the world." P3

G. Cultural Transitions

Studying in another foreign country sparks thrill and excitement with the thought of exploring the unfamiliar and seeing something fresh and different. The possibilities are endless, however, transitioning to another country whilst being accustomed to another culture poses barriers in immersing oneself in the present. Having been accustomed to the culture and environment of Qatar, the PSD alumni battle and face an interplay of a new society with their own cultural identity and traditions, new laws and customs to abide by, and new knowledge and capabilities to explore.

These educational, emotional, cultural, and social changes experienced by the PSD alumni are inevitable and was anticipated. Hence, frustrations were encountered that hindered the PSD alumni from acculturating with ease and connecting deeper with their surroundings. They experienced moments of regret due to the vastly different accustomed norms. Nevertheless, it is just the beginning. And despite the difficulties, they are set to gradually embrace their new normal and lifestyle and find the good and beauty as they venture on a new academic journey. They affirmed:

"Yes, it is difficult to communicate, speaking another language. The standards of speaking English fluently are different in America and the Philippines. So, I would not understand the jokes and slangs they use. Also, I would not understand my teachers when they talk fast, it just does not register in my mind." P6
"I did not really feel left out because it is diverse in Australia. Though at first, I had a hard time understanding their accents so I intended not to talk to them as much but now I am getting used to it and I can understand them better." P2
"I remember the first week, everyone was either Australian or Asian. It was hard since everyone would obviously be together. But with my teachers, I don't think I felt left out but there were evident times when everyone was coping up quickly compared to me." She also stated, "It was not easy at all since both countries are opposites. It took some time to get used to the environment knowing that it is something that is inevitable and it's a part of the change." P7
"I work with the school, so I never felt left out by the teachers and school staff. I am left out with my friends because most of them came from a different region in the Philippines. They use a dialect, and I could only comprehend some of the conversations." P8

H. Socio-environmental Reliances

Alienated in unfamiliar surroundings with people of different social and cultural backgrounds, where feared awkward and frustrating situations are bound to happen, the PSD alumni sought to lean on someone or something they could relate to overcome and eventually adapt to college life in another foreign land. On the contrary, they found support in the newly made international peers, professors, and families at a distance. For some, a positive mindset and the thought of inclusion helped them conquer their situation. The participants asserted that:

"I have experience growing up overseas dealing with people of different nationalities." He added, "Everybody is accommodating and friendly. The lecturers and students can be reached easily and are willing to entertain any school concerns. This is a great opportunity to socialize and meet new people." P1
"I have never felt left out with my peers or with the teachers and the school itself. The school is diverse and supportive of international students. All freshmen must stay in the dorms and when you're in the dorms, you instantly have people to talk to. Everybody was open-minded and everything went smoothly for me." P3
"It was easy for me because I came here with my best friend, so I had someone to lean on and talk to when I feel homesick. Since I worked at a Filipino restaurant I was mostly with Filipinos. Having that kind of community helped me a lot." P2
"In Tbilisi State University, there is a faculty for international students and a faculty for Georgians. We are all adjusting to one another. We have this bond that needs us to know, accept and adjust in this journey. There was never a time that I felt left out because all of us are adjusting at the same pace." P4
"It was easy because I have a Filipina roommate also from PSD. Both of us were able to adjust easily to the new environment. We also have an agent who assists us with everything." P5

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The PSD alumni found that their new environment was refreshing and nostalgic in the sense that it was like their home country. There were cultural differences yet they were exhilarated to learn more about it. The participants said that:

"It was easy because when I first visited Tbilisi, Georgia I found it remarkably similar to the Philippine province. Full of trees, fresh air and unlike in Qatar, the air is not fresh." P4

"It was easy to adapt to the environment because despite having a bit of culture shock, it's very similar to the Philippine setting, it's freer and it's more open. It's all just about your mindset. People there speak their minds, and everybody just goes about their lives in their own ways and nobody would judge you for that and that just makes adapting easier." P3

"No, I loved the idea that I could explore and be more exposed to a different type of environment and culture." P5

I. Influenced Acculturation

Being accustomed to the laws and traditions of Qatar and Philippine School Doha, PSD graduates were able to recognize the contrasts and parallels, as well as the pros and drawbacks, with their current awakening since they were familiar with the rules and traditions of Qatar and Philippine School Doha. Transitioning to a new culture was made more difficult by the passage of time. Furthermore, the PSD alumni's deeply entrenched conventions and routines influenced their acculturation to the new country. Regardless of their tendencies, they took advantage of the opportunity to apply the values and abilities they had learned in Qatar and PSD to a new culture and learning environment. It has also aided their development as an autonomous individual and a conscientious college student. They mentioned:

"I studied and stayed in Qatar for 12 years, I guess it was difficult because I was always reliant on my parents but now that I'm away from them and live independently I have to do things myself now that I'm becoming an adult." P2

"I was in PSD for about 15 years. I think the length of stay in Qatar would affect everything when moving to a new place. The longer you stay in Qatar, the more you get accustomed to the place and its traditions being a Muslim country." P3

"I studied in PSD for 4 years so I would say yes because I spent almost half of my life in Qatar which made me develop my own routine and now moving to a completely different land required me to basically reprogram and rebuild myself again." P7

"It does not affect me since I studied in PSD for three years only. Although, learning the fact that the Philippine curriculum is too hard for the students did affect me." P6

"I studied in Philippine School Doha for two years in senior high. I would say that the length of time did not affect the difficulty I experience in Malaysia. PSD helped me and prepared me in doing research papers." P1

"I spent 15 years in PSD. I don't think it affects me that much. I have been doing well with PSD's curriculum, I brought most of my values here, and it is helpful." P8

With what once was, some participants found transitioning to the new culture different and challenging, obliged to become independent being away from their families. Moreover, a different culture practices a disparate curriculum even more as they transition from high school to college. Hence, a participant seemed to be disappointed with the lack of hands-on experience that Philippine School Doha (PSD) offered. The participants expressed that:

"No, although it was a big decision, I do not regret staying in another country. However, I do regret being away from my parents. All in all, my parents were supportive of my decision to study here in Malaysia. I have a different experience here, learning a lot so it was not a mistake for me to study overseas." P1

"Compared to studying in the Philippines for Qatar, we do not get as many events or hobby-based organizations. I sometimes do regret it because I think it would have been more fun studying in Qatar or in the Philippines though I'm still pretty happy with my decision." P2

In contrast, some PSD alumni found that studying abroad and embracing new cultures was their destiny. Beforehand, they eagerly weighed the pros and cons then firmly made the big decision. The determination to pursue this new venture and passion in discovering the unknown was evident. Thus, their positive mindset sets a positive outlook. The participants declared that:

"I do not regret anything because I think that it was just the right choice because as I said a while ago, it was time for a new beginning, time for a change and something new and no regrets with my decision or whatsoever. There was this sort of fear at the first during the first part but as time went along, it just worked out well." P3

"Not really because I chose this path. It is extremely hard to study medicine, but I love it because if you really want to achieve something then you have to accept the things along your way. This too shall pass in every situation that I face." P4

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"I was excited about the idea of studying abroad with international students and living in a different country. Also, I adjusted to the new learning environment, well." P5
"I do not regret it because I can see the evident difference. I feel like I am not wasting my time studying here since I get to apply what I learn." P7

J. Emotional Alterations

These alumni carry a wave of emotions as they move from one place to another. Harvesting the desire to study in a university far from their homeland, they prepare themselves for the adjustment they are about to face in their found environment. Since they are unfamiliar with the living circumstances of being far from their families, they experience emotional changes and shifts in their moods. Moreover, being university students, they are challenged to adjust to a new set of people. While doing so, their mental and emotional state is on the line. Some of the participants mentioned that:
"It was very hard since I had to reboot my system. I had to reprogram everything that I know to excel in my units. I had to ask my teachers and learn new methods, so I had to relearn a new system of learning." P7
"I keep myself busy to distract myself from the stress. In my first few days of transitioning here, I went out a lot to distract myself from the stress of homesickness" He added, "My emotional stability greatly affected my performance in school. My course is the diploma of leadership and management. Having emotional stability, I have better collaboration with people." P8

As their adjustment period shows how they move forward in their daily lives, they are often tested emotionally. Homesickness, lack of self-esteem, self-doubt, and the likes are often obstacles. Being away from their loved ones affects not only their mental stability but also their academic performance. The participants stressed that:
"My emotional stability went down when the pandemic hit, and we were just halfway through our semester that time and it affected my academic standing. It was very difficult to adjust to everything, even online is hard until now, and having my emotional stability all over the place made my academic standing fall too. Trying to manage emotions with school is just too much to handle, it really did affect me negatively." P3
"It depends on my mood if I'm happy and comfortable. I excel at my performance in class, but when I'm discouraged and stressed out, I have a hard time concentrating. It would affect my academic performance." P5

K. Motivational Environment

Fostering a motivational surrounding helps one cope with the unfamiliarity of moving to a new university in a completely foreign land. Having that said, discovering a new set of diverse people ready to help one adjust is the key to a volant adaptation to their new environment. The chosen participants articulated that:
"Going outside and exploring the city with my friends or by myself was my coping mechanism so that I don't feel isolated when I'm home or just in my room." P2
"I've never felt left out with my peers or with the teachers and the school itself. The school is pretty diverse and actually very supportive of international students such as us. All the freshmen have to stay in the dorms and when you're in the dorms, you instantly have people to talk to. Everybody was open-minded and everything went smoothly for me." P3
"My parents taught me how to be independent and I have experienced going to at least 6 schools as of now. We message and call each other to cope up with the distance and regularly update them on the ongoings here. My roommate also helps me." P5
"I found a friend in someone who is also an international student three years ahead of me. Having someone in the same boat helped me and guided me with decision-making and with navigation through Uni." P7
All the while, the participants revealed that they developed coping strategies due to the stress of being far from family. Distractions like these help them keep their head above water as they try to adamantly survive their daily living. The participants enunciated that:
"Since I do miss my family, I would video call them every day to not feel homesick, and when I can't call them, I go out with friends and distract myself. I also find different hobbies that I can do like reading books, drawing, or singing." P2
"The main challenge I see when living independently is homesickness. Living independently means that you now have a lot of responsibilities aside from just school. You are going to have to learn to balance your life with your school to handle things well. We don't think about other responsibilities when we have our parents since they have our back but living independently is the opposite of that. You have to manage your own problems and to learn how to actually strive by yourself." P3
"I think it's essential to connect yourself with other people. Having a group of people helps with coping up with homesickness." P7

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L. Psychological Barriers

Stumbling blocks are unavoidable when it comes to honing oneself in a new setting. These barriers cause miscommunication and misconceptions resulting in stress and anxiety. Having different levels of perception can create a barrier between two unfamiliar people trying to connect. With that, insecurities and uneasiness arise. The participants have proven the claim as they mention that:

"I guess the insecurities, I feel like since they're more fluent in English they sound smarter. During the first years, I felt like I sounded dumb and repetitive because of how basic my vocabulary is compared to them. I would feel lost and inferior towards my classmates." P2

"It was difficult to adjust since I had no one to talk to and I didn't understand their lingo so it was tough getting to know them and thankfully they were the ones who approached me. I was giving up emotionally in high school because I didn't like it. I was left with my relatives and I felt so homesick." P6

It is very crucial to be prepared to face a new scene when moving somewhere new and unfamiliar. As the participants have highlighted their experiences, they expressed how their emotional behavior affected their adjustment period. The participants stated that:

"I'm excited and happy and I enjoyed the idea of being in a new country. However, when my dad left me here, I felt empty and alone. I could not focus on my studies and would affect my grades." P5

"The negative experiences that I had are homesickness. It scared me to be in a different land and not knowing anyone. Another, was learning everything again on my own since I had to manage myself and my well-being. On the other hand, I learned a lot of positive things which includes meeting new people that had different stories and experiences." P7

Furthermore, these new changes in their routines have affected the way they perform in their new environment. The unfamiliarity was evident though having positive effects, the negative effects weighed them down in the process.

IV. DISCUSSION

As fresh high school graduates begin their journey in facing such uncertainties, choosing a country and its college can be quite a challenge. Explaining further, not only do undergraduates opt to find quality education abroad, but also postgraduate students prefer to take tertiary studies elsewhere and discover a variety of learning experiences and a new environment. With Filipino students studying abroad, they encounter a wide range of difficulties once in the country. Hence, these problems affect the students in many aspects such as emotionally, physically, and mentally. A certain unfamiliarity can be encountered by the student and can give a sense of uneasiness as students may face culture shock and language barriers.

Looking over the possibilities of the struggles of each student, the primary purpose of this study is to give light and unfold the lived experiences of Filipino students studying abroad when it comes to overcoming such problems. The purpose of the study is to learn about the insights of Filipino students who had challenges along the route, as well as the modifications and arrangements they had to make. These include major life changes that could affect their physical and emotional conduct. Students demonstrate their resiliency and how they deal with setbacks.

A. Educational Adjustments

As an independent individual, emigrating for tertiary education requires great responsibility. Students must find ways to manage themselves alone while managing their studies in an unfamiliar place. First-year college students are assigned to search for a new social environment, develop a relationship with the institution, adjust to new roles and responsibilities, and control the separation from friends and family (Credé & Niehorster, 2012).

High school graduates should adapt to the new environment and surroundings as soon as they attend college. They must be able to sort out the new responsibilities they are assigned.

There is a certain level of preparation essentially devoted for students before moving to another school. High schools brace their students for their preparedness in their university life. They carry out activities and other career-related ventures, offering steady readiness for their graduating students. College readiness is the extent to which their prior educational and personal encounters have prepared them for the responsibilities and expectations they would face in college (Conley, 2001). Alumni's high school experiences are as impactful for their upcoming college years. Additionally, it is to ascertain that students are well equipped and prepared for the career they want to pursue in the future.

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In addition, students must first attain good academic performance in their high school years. This is a need for them to prepare themselves to get admitted to the university of their choice. High school academic performance is significant to other colleges. It can determine whether they get accepted to their selected course as there are grade marks needed to be acquired. Early college high schools are gaining ground as a distinctive way to boost high school graduation, college enrolment, and degree completion rate (Barba, 2012). The high school serves as a training ground for alumni to go through college. It is where they must excel in their academic performance in senior year as a way to increase their chances and fix their college enrolments.

Moreover, to enter the college or university of their choice, alumni must also meet these requirements. These include the tests, documents, and other prerequisites. This is to ensure that they are approved and qualified to be in that certain college they want to go to for their undergraduate studies. Standardized and placement tests are utilized to ensure students' readiness for college (Byrd & Macdonanald, 2005). Student visas and passports are also prominent documents that alumni need to obtain to study abroad.

First-year students may suffer throughout their first year of college due to greater academic requirements, the need for self-motivation, the lack of a social network, and the separation from their family (Santiago-Rivera & Bernstein, 1996; Wilkie & Kuckuck, 1989; Sullivan, 2010). It indicates that these graduates who are in their first year of college had a difficult time transitioning to a new learning environment, particularly when their families are far away and social contacts are limited. This enhanced their personal responsibilities, particularly in their academics. In order to survive in their new institution, alumni have gone through a series of harrowing events.

Firstly, there is a distinction between college and high school academic systems, there is also a disparity between the workload given to the students. Philippines uses the K-12 program which is followed by Philippine School Doha (PSD) as their utilized curriculum. K-12 covers kindergarten and 12 years of elementary, junior and senior high school based on the Department of Education (DepEd) Primer (Crisol & Alamillo, 2014). In high school, students should also handle both extra-curricular activities and academics. They should be able to balance out their activities related to and unrelated to school. Meanwhile, colleges and universities use the degree level system such as undergraduate for high school students, masters and doctoral degree. College students are more likely to focus on their major courses and course-related activities. It explains that college and high school are very different from each other hence, PSD alumni have difficulty in adapting to their new learning environment.

Moreover, there is also a clear difference in how college professors teach compared to high school teachers. Therefore, alumni have seen and hardly adjusted to those learning styles and systems incorporated by their universities. Teachers must distinguish their own teaching styles and test their practices related to those teaching styles (Conti, 1989; Cranton & Carusetta, 2004; McGowan, 2007). Professors have their own way of teaching as high school teachers do so. High school teachers are more engaging and have the ability to interact more with the students. High school has a different approach towards their students in terms of teaching as it gives everything such as powerpoints, reviewers and pointers.

On the other hand, as alumni step into college, they are recognized to be independent adults and able to handle themselves. Adult learners are self-steered and independent, they can utilize their wealth of experience as a wealth of learning resources, are aware of their learning needs, and want to apply their skills and knowledge to real problems and tasks (Zhou, 2011). College students adjust to how their college professors teach. They also focus and apply their major courses and knowledge to real-life situations and tasks.

Lastly, these different teaching styles used in secondary education and tertiary education gives alumni difficulty in adapting to the country they are studying in. Teaching style affects not only the educational strategies used by teachers but also the learning capabilities of students (Chang, 2010). Their learning abilities will be affected as they adapt to the academic system used in their college. The alumni's behavior and attitude can be affected while coping up with the teaching and learning style used abroad. The student's academic performance also relies on the effectiveness of the teaching styles used in their tertiary education. Teaching styles about learning styles can greatly improve academic performance, student attitudes, and student behavior at the university level (Zhou, 2011). The efficiency of the learning and teaching styles utilized by the alumni will be reflected in their academic performance. It can be a basis if the students are able to understand and cope with the new academic environment abroad.

B. Social Adaptations

Being away increases the distress the PSD alumni are going through. Khawaja and Stallman (2016) state that "International students encounter a range of additional challenges as a part of their tertiary study experience." Thus, students must have the will and determination to overcome the drawbacks while living in an unfamiliar place. First-year international students confronted unique challenges when pursuing a college degree outside of their home country (Tan, 2019; Yakunina et al., 2013). The high school graduates must find a way to conquer the social changes evident in the foreign country to create balance in all aspects.

Terziev describes that "adaptation is not just a way of existence of the individual, but also one of the mechanisms of social progress, which is a pragmatic approach in understanding the adaptation" (2015, p. 924)

Instances of accent and language barrier, culture shock, isolation, and alienation are usual complications the high school graduates encounter when migrating to a country. Wu et al. (2015) state that "Surviving in a new community is the first lesson they have to deal with, and they need to have a support system when they newly arrive." Due to these certain factors, the alumni tend to be overwhelmed and must endure different uncertainties. They established numerous coping mechanisms to overcome homesickness and anxiety. Constant communication with family and friends seemed a huge stepping stone in battling loneliness. Further, exploring the unfamiliar place increases awareness and benefits in adapting to a different environment.

The disparity between the Philippine educational system and the international education environment is evident. Some of these challenges are universal, while others depend on the institution and community in which one undertakes their studies (Sabbadini et al., 2013). Therefore, switching to international education made it challenging. The alumni prepared themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally to stimulate better learning. Moreover, an optimistic mindset encourages them to bring their vast experience and extensive knowledge.

Aside from homesickness, the alumni also battled stress due to the unfamiliar educational environment. They established a desirable strategy to surmount pressure. First, the alumni eased themselves by socializing and searching for hobbies. Zerengok et al. (2018) imply that leisure participation is a promising tool to create socially accommodating environments for this population." Socializing relieves culture shock, considering that the alumni meet new people in a foreign country. Also, being immersed in a new hobby opens new opportunities and fosters self-discovery. Persaud and Persaud (2015) declare that "engaging with a hobby is an effective coping strategy to recuperate from academics and helps to sustain health."

Further, some alumni took strength in God to alleviate the burden of alienation. Gebhard (2012) suggests that "international students become involved in religious activities that can help them connect with domestic students, therefore, avoiding isolation from others." To add to that, building a good relationship with their professors helped them learn various teaching styles. Continuous communication seemed successful in dealing with the stress of transitioning to the current international setting.

There is a difference between migrating earlier than they did. Some said migrating earlier means more time in adapting before entering college. However, some alumni said they migrated at the right time since they have matured and developed themselves over the years. Overall, going for the right timing for self-discovery and finding purpose helped most of them to adapt. The alumni built better relationships, especially outside school. Leisure time activities impact not only the social adjustment of the students but also psychological and physiological benefits (Zerengok et al., 2018). It also had a positive effect on their emotional and mental well-being. Also, it made them more productive as the alumni knew they got company amidst the situation. Relationships among students tended to cultivate during free time while abroad and through roommate interactions (Davis and Coryell, 2017).

C. Cultural Transitions

Initially, moving to another country to pursue tertiary studies was perceived as an exciting and thrilling experience with hints of fear but mostly curiosity. The students feel a sense of enthusiasm and success having to fulfil a dream and start a new stage in discovery and growth. Brooks and Waters (2009) conclude that students perceive studying abroad as an opportunity to avoid failure at home and an opportunity to redeem themselves. They may manifest anticipation and appreciation of the possibilities found in the new culture. However, when exposed to a new environment of different cultures that include unfamiliar body language, gestures, words, tonality, beliefs, laws, and history, the students are bound to experience frustration and culture shock.

Sooner or later, conflicts will arise due to the differences in the culture of the PSD alumni and the adopted country. These events can spark mixed feelings of confusion, anxiety, anger, and discontentment. Aneesh (2004) argues, “taking roots in new cultural soil is never easy." Apart from being alone, limitations such as accent and language barriers hinder the students from communicating and interacting effectively with the people they encounter.

Their alma mater, Philippine School Doha (PSD), is exclusively for the Filipino community, stimulating the learners to speak their mother tongue often. The interaction between international students with their classmates then the application of relational skills might be challenging for them as they constantly worry about their proficiency in English (Oyenyi et al., 2021). Misunderstandings could be a drawback in expressing the needs and insights of the alumni, discouraging them.

Yildrim (2009) describes that the first-year transition can be difficult especially for international students adjusting to new social norms and experiencing challenges such as geographic distance from family and friends. However, in due course, time will come where the alumni will be able to resolve some conflicts and regain a sense of appreciation for other cultures.

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In his research, Buckley (2015) states, "upon returning, students claim that they have grown more mature, sophisticated, hungry for knowledge, culturally aware, and sensitive."

Moreover, despite instances of acculturative stress, the PSD alumni began to socialize and had the opportunity to build relationships with the people around them. From these developments, they recognized the differences in culture and backgrounds. In a study conducted by Sobkowiak in 2019, he probed studying abroad provided students with the motivation to explore and interpret the encountered diversity. Therefore, such interactions equip them with an understanding of foreign cultures. This recognition is also known as intercultural sensitivity.

The bonds the students have formed have helped them to overcome and acculturate. Further, not only does the reliance on peers of the adolescent provide companionship, but it also stabilizes the environment for managing new situations (Durante, 1995). They learned to respect one another, developing cultural competence as they acknowledge that everyone is distinctive, each one possessing different experiences, beliefs, values, and language.

Consequently, in a study conducted by Ward and Geeraert in 2016, the process of acculturating is affected by context. It is multi-dimensional, specifically, family, work, school, socio-political, climate, demographical and psychological characteristics. So, the length and ease of acculturation vary from one individual to another. Nevertheless, the process of acculturation depends on how much the individuals value their native cultural identity and the host society (Jiang et al., 2009). It implies that the students have an opportunity to alter their acculturation process subjectively if they are willing. They can either embrace and strengthen their cultural identity or assimilate to the new culture. In addition, studying abroad pushes students to reconsider their own various identities, beliefs and associations (Braskamp & Engberg, 2011). They also mentioned that global identity includes "seeing one's own uniqueness" to the rest of the world, implying that students can choose to uphold and stay true to their roots in recognition of this identity.

D. Emotional Alterations

Independency and stability coincide within the walls of moving from one land to another. As they start a new chapter in their lives, they prepare themselves to open their life to new people and possibilities. Moving to another country is becoming more well-versed these days, moreover if one comes from a third-world country seeking for tertiary education (Allen and Cole, 2010). Giving them a head start, they are more prepared to face the new world beneath their feet. Studies show how motivation coincides with strong predictors that help the decision-making process (Hercog & Van De Laar, 2016). Having to make a decision is already a huge step towards one's dream. To follow this decision and act upon it is another stride closer to one's yearned vision. All throughout, self-determined motivation becomes beneficial to a student's self-adaptation, striving to come close to their goal of pursuing an education system worthy of their time and efforts. These motivations have strengthened their emotional behavior and the motivational extent to carry on in a different environment. Even though there are risks and factors to consider as an international student, their ulterior motive lies in the certainty that their host country will provide them great job opportunities (Chirkov, 2006).

The lengthy process of relocating to another country tires oneself physically and mentally. The stride to one's path to greatness resides in the courage to go on day by day. According to Mason (2012), "the motivation of oneself to continue and strive for the best is a result of having an encouraging group of individuals."

According to Oguz and Ataseven (2016), motivation and metacognition rely upon one another. The skills and academic performances are a part of how students positively aim for better throughout their success. All that considered, a student cannot effectuate properly if their motivation levels are low. Studies show how students must have the determination and will to use their metacognitive skills in their academic behavior. Related motivators like friend groups, favorable outcomes in tasks, and the purpose of learning are also significant variables for one's academic success (Dogan, 2015). These variables help students to create a better and more motivational environment. These also help them hone an atmosphere ready to guide them through their adjustment period in a different land.

Furthermore, their adjustment period proves how motivation plays a vital role in one's familiarization in a new land. Stumbling blocks are inevitable in one's adjustment. Highlighted that they are in a land completely new to them, obstacles and barriers are almost everywhere. Miscommunication and language barriers are first-hand problems for international students. According to Wu, Garza, and Guzman (2015), social isolation is evident when students need to engage with one another in various group activities. Some tend to huddle with students from the same culture, causing some to be left out.

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Moreover, since these students are far from their families, being in social isolation from others takes a toll on their mental stability. Thurber & Walton (2012) expressed that homesickness can be intense for international students. These result in anxiety and stress, later on affecting their academic performances. Vulnerability is trivially evident when students feel incapable of their workload. Murphy-Shigematsu (2002) stated that the international students' capability to cope varies greatly if their expectations are failed or met.

Lastly, Cai & Sankaran (2015) stated that studying abroad helps international students to grow cross-cultural awareness. Studying abroad amplifies their adaptation and domestication to a foreign land. Their first year remains identified as their training ground throughout their adjustment period. The holistic process of studying abroad helps students facilitate the difference and similarities of cross-cultural endeavors.

V. CONCLUSION

The rocess of moving is a difficult task on its own but migrating to another country and starting a new life is another level that beholds another story. Studying abroad is a life-changing decision with various rewards yet suggests drawbacks. A study conducted by Sobkowiak (2019) discovered that participants formed new acquaintances that enabled discussions on a range of issues and cultural differences. Nevertheless, learning a new culture required active and personal engagements, thus generating meaningful connections of people with different cultural backgrounds.

Besides, the primal purpose of taking their education abroad was to broaden their range of opportunities for their future. Students actualize their desire to study abroad because of determinants such as career opportunities, high employability rates, available undergraduate and postgraduate programs, or affordability. Employers expect graduates to have sufficient knowledge, skills, and competencies that meet their criteria (Sisavath, 2021).

There are 4 stages of migration which each stage have their different corresponding stresses (Bhugra, 2004). In the first couple of years, the students exhibit resiliency and dedication in decision-making and problem-solving. The problems encountered came from culture shocks like language barriers, differences in learning and teaching styles, and emotional struggles that hindered them from transitioning early on their journey. However, in a new environment, one cannot disregard meeting people as opposed to transitioning alone. Loved ones and family are always present to ease and hasten their adaptation process to the foreign land.

Further, the researchers recommend that there must be constant communication with loved ones and family since homesickness is prominent among the interviewees. Their loved ones should check up on them from time to time as the early phase of transitioning is isolating and can induce feelings of depression and anxiety. And as such, the utilization of devices or technology may be able to help with the homesickness of the students (Kelly et al, 2021).

These people know the individuals better than the people they are bound to meet in the new land. Because of this foundation, the participants have a sense of ease with these people because they know they can trust them. Along with this, preparation is critical and vital as it also affects the individuals psychologically. The students should strengthen a positive outlook on the situation because it can dictate their future. Their experience in Philippine School Doha (PSD) helps them in the international field. For instance, the students could combat the amount of work due to the outstanding time management skills they used to practice studying in Qatar. Another, the students had developed a competitive nature that encouraged them to excel. Hence, they should continue to nurture these valuable skills.

Along with this, the implication of studying abroad poses various challenges. They leave behind their families and start a new chapter of independence. Their relationship can drift apart if they do not continue to connect and update each other. Also, the individuals may feel feelings of abandonment and find themselves attached to other people or things to cope with their reality. Getting help from others is the way to go, regardless of not knowing anyone at the beginning. Respecting each other's individualities is a sign of maturity that is favorable in the community. All in all, it will help the students to live a meaningful life, making meaningful new connections. The solutions to the problem should lie directly to the maladjustment which is the new environment (Stroebe et al, 2015).

Finally, based on the simulacrum of the study, the interrelation of the following themes. Specifically, educational adjustments, social adaptations, cultural transitions, and emotional alterations were the changes the PSD alumni encountered as they transitioned to their chosen country for tertiary studies. These factors are all correlated as the students experienced similar situations adjusting to the new environment and conditions. Despite difficulties, the participants overcame the obstacles by developing coping mechanisms, staying connected with their loved ones and new relationships, finding the beauty in the unfamiliar, and accepting and setting a determined mindset.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following terms were defined conceptually and operationally to add ease of understanding.

Abroad. Means to go beyond the boundaries of one's country or in a foreign country; excluding Philippines and Qatar.

Acculturative Stress. A reduction in health status including psychological, somatic, and social aspects of acculturating individuals (Berry et al., 1987).

Cool. The raw analysis of data which is the initial before arriving to the final transcription.

Dendrogram. It is a qualitative tool that is used to categorize significant statements in preparation for analyzing data (Thelwell et al., 2007).

Educational Adjustments. The experiences of students towards the different academic approach and teaching styles compared to the styles they were accustomed to.

Emic. It is the raw response from the participants themselves.

Emotional Alterations. The outcome of being far away from something or someone familiar such as family and friends such as anxiety and stress.

Emotional Baggage. Refers to the negative emotions from past experiences.

Etic. It is the researcher's perception and translation of the partcipants' response.

Migrant. A person that travels to a different country or place, often in order to find work.

Phenomenology. It is "the science of essence of consciousness" focused on defining the concept of intentionality and the meaning

of lived experience, from the first-person point of view (Husserl, 1970) understood as the direction of consciousness toward understanding the world that it neither includes nor possesses, but towards which it is always turned (Martins, 1992).

Placid. Calm and peaceful, with little movement or activity.

Pseudonym. A fictitious name for the confidentiality of each respondent.

Reservoir. A place where anything is collected or accumulated in great amounts.

Robotfoto. A Dutch term, the photo-like picture drawn by police from a witness description of a suspect in a criminal investigation (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002).

Social Adaptations. The encountered adjustments to a new society which differs in demand, restrictions, and morals.

Vigor. Effort, energy, and enthusiasm.

Warm. The exhaustion of data where themes usually develop and emerge.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH



Sarah Grace P. Almario was born on September 21, 2003 and was raised in Doha, Qatar. She is currently a Grade 12 STEM student in Philippine School Doha, Qatar. Looking back, she was a consistent Bronze Awardee from Preschool to Junior high school. Further, she was consistent in top 3. Being musically inclined, she nurtured and shared her talent as she joined and became an active member of the PSD Hiyaw Chorale from S.Y. 2016-2017 to S.Y. 2021-2022. Further, she was a pianist and a vocalist in the band named Roses and Thorns of which became the champion during the Battle of the Bands on S.Y. 2019-2020. She had the passion to lead and serve and so she trained and became a commissioned officer in the Citizenship Advancement Training (CAT) as a 2nd Lieutenant. Aside from leading, she also enjoyed artistic and recreational avocations and channeled it through art and writing competitions. After Junior High School, she received a Laureola Bronze award during the second semester of Grade 11. She plants to pursue to study and gain a Bachelor's degree in University of Santo Thomas, Philippines and plans to pursue higher education in the United States.



Karyl Christine P. Banal was born on August 10, 2004 in Cavite, Philippines. She is currently a Grade 12 Senior High School student at Philippine School Doha (PSD) enrolled in the Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) strand as she strives to be an Architect in the future. She was a Laureola bronze awardee during the second semester of Grade 11 S.Y. 2020-2021 and a consistent Top 10 in class during her Grade 10 S.Y. 2019-2020. She also has a record of perfect attendance on her junior high school days and received recognition as 1st runner up alongside her team with the PSD@28 logo making contest. She also joined Scouting in her Junior Highschool days and received leadership training recognitions. She is also a member of the COMELEC organization in school and participated in video editing tasks and monitoring elections and events that occur. She's currently planning on pursuing her Architectural course with a Bachelor's degree in Landscape Architecture in University of Calgary in Canada after graduating from Philippine School Doha (PSD).

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Cyrus Miguel M. Escalona was born on August 31, 2003 in Batangas City, Philippines. He is currently a Grade 12 Senior High School student at PSD (Philippine School Doha) under the strand of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and believes that his dream of becoming a computer engineer will surely be achieved under the STEM strand. Throughout his elementary years, he was constantly in the top 5 of his class and achieved top 9 among the whole batch when he was grade 1. T grade 4, the experiment he made along with his team earned first place at the Science Fair of S.Y. 2013-2014. When he was in grade 10, he constantly placed in the top 15 of the class. He would also constantly join the boy scout organization and had a one-time chance of being a troop leader. He was also an official member of the drum corps and through this, he earned his position of being one of the first Filipino Qatar Scouts. He participated in the Battle of the Bands during his grade 7, grade 9, and grade 10. It was only on his grade 10 S.Y. 2019-2020 that he and his band passed through eliminations and reached the finals with only 8 bands remaining. He plans to participate again this S.Y. 2021-2022. To pursue a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science and Engineering, he is currently planning to enroll in the College of the North Atlantic – Qatar.



Grace Y. Padilla was born on December 31, 2003, and has lived in Qatar for 17 years. She is currently a grade 12 student taking the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) strand at Philippine School Doha. She was a Laureola bronze awardee for two consecutive semesters in grade 11. She was also a consistent top student in her elementary years until junior high school. She is an academic distinction awardee from grade 3 until grade 7 and a bronze awardee in grade 10. She was also acknowledged as best in Math, Science, Research and Filipino in her grades 8 and 9 and was also a member of the Girl Scout Organization from elementary until grade 7. She has participated in different school competitions involving public speaking in Filipino and English and mathematics-related in her junior high school years. After graduating senior high school in 2022, she plans to take her bachelor's degree at the College of North Atlantic-Qatar (CNA-Q).



Nilo III A. Ungui was born on October 22, 2003 in Quezon City Philippines. He is currently a grade 12 Senior high School student at Philippine School Doha under the strand of STEM or Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. As he aims to be an aspiring Civil engineer in the future. In his elementary year 2010-2015 he was constantly placed 12th in his class, he was notable for his athletic skills and academically throughout his grade school. He would constantly join extracurricular activities like Mtap, drum choir, and the basketball team. Continuing his journey as a high school student he would join CET review to prepare for his entrance examination for his chosen university. After graduating senior high school in 2022, he plans to take a bachelor degree in the field of engineering, specifically Civil engineering at UST or University of Santo Tomas.

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Brian Matthew P. Valerio was born and raised in Doha, Qatar and has taken his Preschool through Grade 12 In Philippine School Doha. He is currently a senior high school student who is under STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) strand of Philippine School Doha which he believes can help to achieve his dream job and aspirations in the future of becoming a Mechanical Engineer. As for his future plans, he aims to be able to study at Mapúa University Intramuros to obtain his bachelor's degree. During his Pre-Highschool days, he was able to get some awards like best in Elective Math and Civil Technology. In his junior high school years, his general average would increase constantly to be able to join his class ranking consistently in Grade 9 S.Y 2018-2019 through Grade 10 S.Y. 2019-2020.

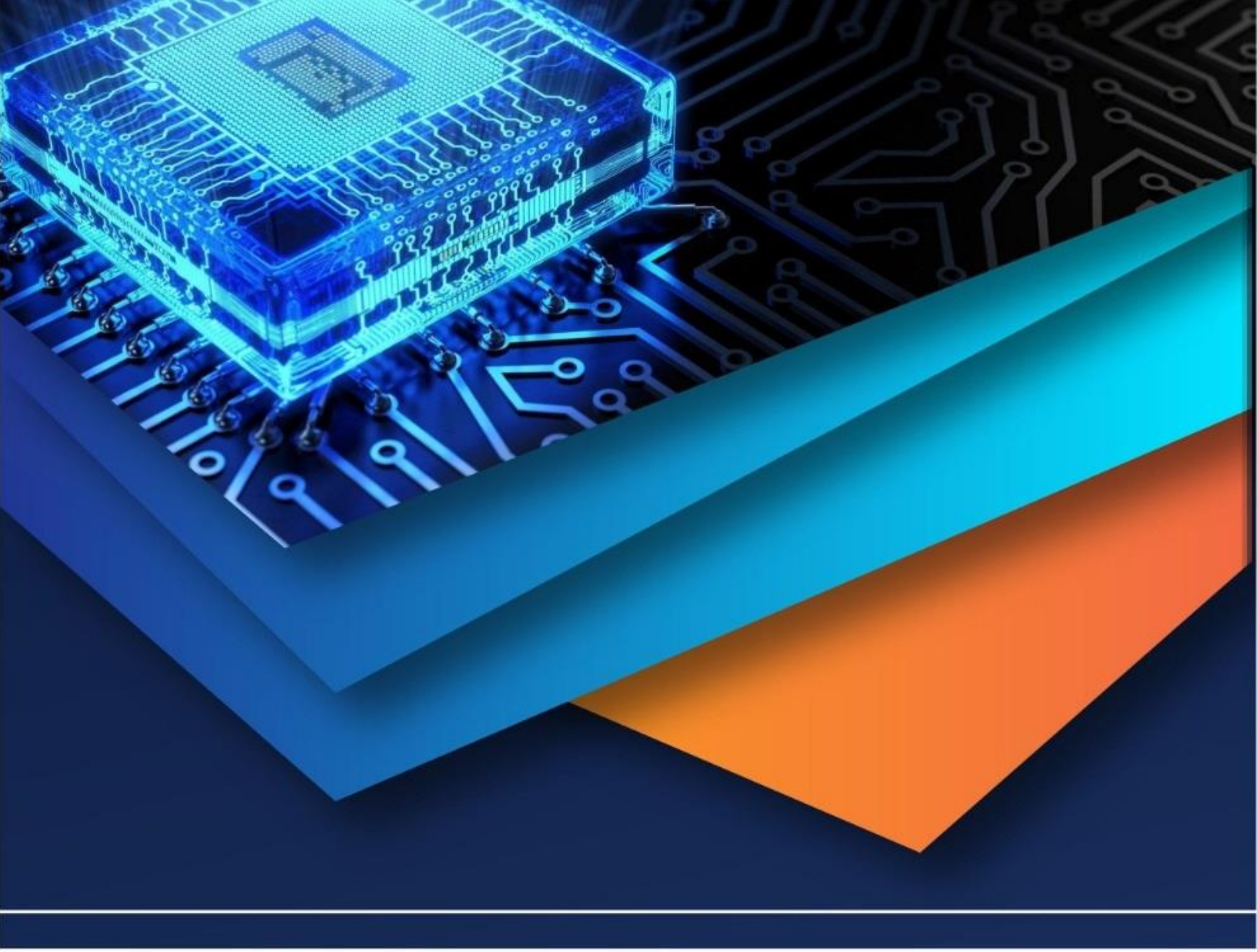


Micole Angeline D. Victoria was born on July 3, 2004. She is currently studying at Philippine School Doha (PSD) as a Senior High School student under the STEM strand. She was consistently on the honor roll during her elementary years. She also obtained multiple sub-awards for Filipino, Science, English, and Performance Arts. During her Junior High School years, she was consistently in the Top 15 of the class and was even included in the Top 10 of their section back in 10th grade. She also received multiple certificates and best-in awards, one of them being Best in Values and Exemplary Skills in English. Her dream is to become a Cardiothoracic Surgeon in the future; she also aims to apply to multiple universities. She dreams of passing the USTAR applications for the University of Santo Tomas (UST), vouching to become a Nurse as a Thomasian for her pre-medical course. She also has plans of continuing her Doctorate in New York University-Langone Hospital (NYULH), honing her skills and talents in a better and more outspread environment.



Cassandra Ysabel M. Visaya was born on December 23, 2003 in Las Piñas City, Philippines. She is currently a grade 12 student taking the STEM strand in Philippine School Doha (PSD). She believes that she can achieve her dream of becoming a nurse through her chosen strand and school. She is a consistent honor student from preschool to elementary. During her elementary days, she was consistently in the top 1 of her classes from Grade 1 to Grade 5, and she graduated elementary as Top 3. She also won in the District Schools Press Conference Journalism in News Writing-Filipino, earning the Top 8 and Top 10 during Grade 5 and 6. She also had the chance to compete at the Division Schools Press Conference. In her high school years in the Philippines, she joined the Drum and Lyre band as a majorette. Before the pandemic, she was a volleyball varsity at PSD and a recipient of the Best Libero award for two consecutive years. She was a Laureola bronze awardee during the second semester of Grade 11 S.Y 2020-2021. After graduating senior high school in 2022, she plans to pursue a degree in Nursing through the University of Calgary in Qatar (UCQ).

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