



Behind the Glitz and Glamour: Experiences of Senior Highschool Students in Pageantry in Davao City, Philippines

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author EJB wrote the introduction and methodology of the study, helped to write the results and discussion, and helped with the overall revisions and parts of the paper. Authors EJB and GKV wrote the conclusion. Author SMD wrote the results and discussion of the study and they also interviewed the participants and helped in transcribed the interview. Author ZDV wrote the methodology and transcribed the interview. Authors GKV and EJB helped with the results, discussion and conclusion. Author MNS helped to write the introduction of the study and revised the overall manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Aims: To provide an overview of the experiences of Mapua Malayan Colleges Mindanao senior high school students who participate in pageantry, focusing on how they balance their personal lives and academic responsibilities.

Study Design: This research employs a descriptive qualitative design, generating data that describes the 'who, what, and where of events or experiences' (Kim et al., 2017).

Place and Duration of Study: The study was conducted at Mapua Malayan Colleges Mindanao, High School Department, from April to May 2023.

Methodology: The primary data sources were interview transcripts from four in-depth interviews (IDIs) and four focus group discussions (FGDs), involving eight participants. The participants were senior high school students who are current or former beauty pageant contestants, with at least one year of experience.

Results: The study covered the participants' lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights. It explored their struggles in maintaining well-being, peer encouragement, time management amidst responsibilities, and the character development fostered by their pageantry experiences. Participants shared how they managed pressures and expectations while balancing academics and pageantry, highlighting both common strategies and unique personal insights.

Conclusion: The research revealed the nuances of balancing academic responsibilities and pageantry. While common coping strategies were identified, each participant's unique perspective provided valuable insights into their individual approaches to managing pressures and expectations. Schools and support networks should offer targeted guidance and resources to help student pageant contestants manage their dual roles effectively, promoting a healthier balance between their academic and extracurricular commitments.

Keywords: Experiences; glitz and glamour; pageantry; qualitative; senior high school.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Davao City, Students who participate in pageants often encounter challenges in balancing their rigorous academic schedules with their passion for competition. Achieving a clear understanding of personal goals is crucial for these students, requiring open discussions with teachers and coaches to ensure alignment and support. This communication not only helps alleviate stress and pressure but also fosters motivation by clarifying expectations for future performance. While support from teachers, coaches, and parents can mitigate some of the challenges, not all students have access to such robust support systems. Consequently, understanding how senior high school students in Davao City navigate their dual commitments to pageantry and academics is essential.

Globally, pageantry serves as a platform for advocating important social issues, as exemplified by Miss Madagascar 2019, Binguira Valérie Anna, who used her platform to promote children's education [1]. This underscores the significance of balancing personal passions with

academic responsibilities, as education is often considered a prerequisite for participation in such competitions. Nationally, pageants are recognized as indicators of personal growth and expression [2]. Locally, anecdotal evidence from Davao City suggests that students with strong support systems are better equipped to manage the pressures of pageantry and academics. However, empirical research on this topic remains limited. While existing studies often explore pageantry's cultural and touristic aspects, there is a dearth of research focusing on the experiences of students balancing pageantry with academic pursuits [3]. This research gap highlights the need for localized studies to elucidate the coping mechanisms and support systems utilized by students in Davao City.

The urgency of this study lies in the lack of empirical research addressing the challenges faced by students participating in pageants while excelling academically. Understanding how these students navigate their dual roles can provide valuable insights for educators, parents, and policymakers to support students effectively. By

addressing this research gap, the study aims to contribute to the academic discourse on extracurricular involvement and academic performance among senior high school students in Davao City.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design. Descriptive qualitative research conducted generates the data that describes the 'who, what, and where of events or experiences' [4]. This qualitative research approach relies on the attempt to systematically describe a situation, problem, phenomenon, etc. The method's primary goal is to arrive at a comprehensive summarization of the situation presented. Therefore, the descriptive qualitative approach is thought to be highly relevant to the purpose of the study.

2.1 Participants

The participants of this study were the senior high school students in Davao City. Furthermore, the participants in this study were chosen using the concept of purposive sampling. The participants who will serve as the primary data source for this study will be chosen purposefully based on various factors. They must currently be a bona fide student at their current institution, they must have multiple experiences in joining beauty pageants— with at least one or more years of experience, and they must be a senior high school student under any academic strand.

2.2 Data Sources and Procedure

The primary data source were the interview transcripts from the four participants' in-depth interview (IDI) and four participants' focus group discussion (FGD) interview carried out by the researchers—a total of eight participants for this study. This source of data will help the researchers get a deeper insight on how students balance their passion with obligation. The data will be gathered from the senior high school students, particularly the ones who are joining beauty pageants or have joined beauty pageants for a year or more. The proponents begin by creating interview guide questions in order to collect the necessary data for this study. The interview questions will include the main questions and follow-up questions. The formal interview will only be conducted by three of the six research group members. After the interviews, the researchers will then transcribe

the data collected from the participants word for word.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Lived Experiences of the Participants

3.1.1 struggles in maintaining the well-being

During the interviews, the participants shared their struggles in balancing pageantry and academics. In fact, many of the participants shared that it was very stressful for them to balance their academic and personal life along with the pageant. Pageantry isn't an easy feat— an easy activity to do so the participants expressed their struggles with balancing and managing their time, priorities, academic and personal life, preparation of the pageant, and so on. Along with the stresses of the pageant itself and their academic life, the expectations and the pressure that came with it added onto their stresses. During the interview, Ms. Planner, Ms. Outspoken, Ms. Blue, Ms. Dream, Ms. Crown, and Ms. Performer experienced a lot of stress when they were joining pageants. They also expressed how hard it was on their end to juggle multiple things at once, such as their personal and academic life, the participants also mentioned that they are honor students and they pay big attention to their grades, so it was really a battle with themselves and the time. This is what Ms. Planner had to say:

P1: Actually, it is very hard like managing your time and studies.

Furthermore, other participants have also expressed and shared their sentiments on how hard it was to balance and try to manage everything. These are what the participants had to say:

P1: It's very hard to maintain especially that I am an honor student.

P6: It's going to be really stressful like pageantry as it is, is a stressful activity.

P7: So, it was really like stressful for me especially when I balance— tried to balance my personal life with it.

P8: For me it was very pressuring and stressful, I could agree with the other participants since being a student is already very stressful, especially in our end.

P3: It's kind of hard sometimes to pursue beauty pageants and studies at the same time since there will be a lot of responsibilities in both works that should be really accomplished.

P4: There's a lot of expectations and pressure on me to be a good student while also being beautiful on stage and there's a lot of expectation and pressure on women in general, in society.

While they were experiencing struggles with balancing their academics, it was a different scenario for these participants who faced the pressures of wanting to win, developing a struggle with their body image, and having to face criticism. Participants Ms. Crown, Ms. Performer, and Ms. Optimism stated the following:

P4: In everything, in every competition that I join— I just want to win, if I don't have that desire, if I don't have that drive to win then I am wasting everyone's time.

P4: People are going to assume that you're dumb, there's a thing that a woman can only have beauty or brains and not both, and that's something I had to struggle with. People would assume that just because you care about your appearance, because you invest in how you look, people would assume that you're shallow.

P8: You'll get criticisms or other negative comments that would affect you.

FGD1, S1.2: Struggles with perfection, like that's the main point like dieting and body image.

The participants have elaborated in the interviews that it was very stressful for them to manage their academics with the pageantry— especially that they give such big importance to their grades and their academic life.

3.1.2 Sense of fulfillment

During the interviews with participants, all of them have mentioned their Sense of fulfillment in their lived experiences as beauty pageants. Joining beauty pageants is not all about glitz and glamour, being a beauty pageant comes with its struggles, but it can also give advantages and opportunities. Most of the

participants have shared how pageantry has been fulfilling to oneself.

Participants shared how pageantry has helped fulfill the dream of becoming a model, using pageantry as a platform, the enjoyment, the thrill, and memories pageantry offers. With that they have also mentioned the use of the platform for charity and as an opportunity to express oneself, along with that passion and passion in advocacies also gives the sense of fulfillment to most participants.

Joining beauty pageants may give you the opportunities of gaining new insights, gaining confidence and becoming a stronger individual.

P2: Of course, we all know that pageantry is not an easy activity or event so balancing pageantry and being a student is really frustrating but fulfilling at the same time.

P3: It has always been my dream.

P4: For charity, if I won that pageant, I would get 10 thousand pesos for my cause of choice, and my second reason was for the glitz and glam! I guess I just wanted an excuse to wear gowns, get my hair done, but that was just a bonus.

The experiences of these participants have the commonality of gaining an advantage from joining and participating in beauty pageants. Most participants have gained mental development after participating in a pageant. Additionally, participants like Ms. Outspoken and Ms. Planner share the thought of pageantry being convenient, in a way where they are given the opportunities to branch out and build connections with other people who may be in their favor in the near future.

3.1.3 The opportunity to build connections

One of the highlights the participants shared during the interview process is that there was a huge emphasis on the need/want to build connections with other peers. Further elaboration from the participants revealed their motives of building connections with fellow pageant contestants, as well as staff members on site, was due to building bigger networks and finding potential friendships [5].

Furthermore, as the participant Ms. Fortitude had mentioned, it has widened their scope during their journey as pageant contestants and

helped spread their advocacies to a wider audience. This is what the participants had to say:

P2: A wider connection circle with different people, organizations, campaigns I could spread my word and my campaign more to different people because of joining pageantries.

P3: This help me gain confidence personally and also widen my network through getting to know a lot of people in school.

P5: I was able to make new friends and new learnings throughout my journey.

The participants stated that pageants offer an opportunity to share viewpoints, organizations to help them during their pageantry challenges, and highlighted the importance of having connections so one can not only spread their advocacies, but to also show who they really are on the stage.

3.1.4 Ability to prioritize responsibilities

The participants gave big emphasis on the fact that they prioritize their academics more than anything and that they also know how to properly manage their time. Though some have also expressed the challenges that came with balancing and prioritizing their responsibilities, they still managed to push through with it. Here are the insights of the participants:

P5: Being a pageant contestant and student can be both challenging for me, because of the schedules, if you know how to manage your time, you can finish it little by little with no rush.

P6: Took a toll on my personal life, which of course hand in hand goes affecting my academic life and initially, my academic life is much more important than my pageantry.

P2: I have a good time management schedule.

P4: I'm good at balancing things out and I also choose what battles to fight.

P2: Joining is not an easy feat— it takes a lot of time to prepare thus, it really interfered with my studies.

P4: My top priority right now is my studies, and I won't let anything interfere with it, not even pageants.

The participants have expressed the big importance of academics and that they prioritize it over anything and that they won't let anything interfere with it— not even pageants.

3.1.5 Encouraged by peers and family

In the interviews, the participants also shared who has always encouraged them to do pageantry. The participants also shared how they can be inspired and motivated by the support that they receive from their family or among their peers. Their self-esteem and motivation rise when they know that someone believes in them and their abilities [4]. Family and friends could provide helpful feedback and guidance, which can help them strengthen their skills and whatever they want to achieve.

P1: My mother, she always wanted me to boost my confidence because I'm not the type of person that's very showy. I'm not super confident in myself.

P2: Thanks to my mom and the peers around me, they have pushed me to join different pageantries.

P7: I was fully supported by my family and friends as well, so that really pushed me to achieving something that I haven't yet.

3.1.6 Ability to improve oneself and others

In the interview, the participants stated how joining pageantries helps in self-development and how it could help other individuals as well. One participant also said she receives incentives as one of the advantages of joining pageantries. It shows that pageantry can also give benefits to these individuals. From themselves to the community, pageantry can be beneficial to people.

During the interview, the participants, Ms. Planner, Ms. Outspoken, and Ms. Blue stated how their time in the pageantry helped them. Planner expressed how she could receive prizes and money during her time in pageantry, Ms. Outspoken expressed how joining pageantries can help with building character and confidence, and Ms. Blue expressed how it helps her how to present herself and how she gained connections. The statements below are what they said:

P1: One of my advantage is I get the prize... you won't lose anything when you join pageants because there's consolation, so every prize, every consolation, and every award you will have money, so I'm also earning in a good way, that can also help my family.

P6: It creates this character out of you, that the character that- when you look back- oh I have this confidence, this newfound confidence now.

P7: I realized also is that; pageantry helped me in a way myself and knowing what improved within me.

P7: It can help you improve yourself, like, with the way you speak, look, stand, and how you carry yourself generally, and, of course you can also make connections and... you would also be given the opportunity to share your advocacy and do your responsibility as well, as a member of, you know, the community.

3.2 Coping Mechanisms

3.2.1 Being flexible

In the interview, the participants expressed how they managed their time. It showed that there could be different strategies to balancing pageantries, academics, and even personal time. The participants also stated how they cope with challenges while dealing with the pageant industry and being a student at the same time [3]. This shows that people have different strategies on how to deal with the challenges they face.

During the interview, Participants Ms. Planner, Ms. Fortitude, Ms. Dream, Ms. Crown, Ms. Optimism, Ms. Outspoken, and Ms. Blue expressed how they cope and overcome their challenges such as time management, priorities, and sacrifices. Ms. Planner, Ms. Optimism, Ms. Dream, Ms. Crown, and Ms. Blue talked about proper time management to cope with what they do. The statements below are what they said:

P1: I always bring my planner because I always have to take note of every detail of my schedule.

P3: Time management, so you really have to balance.

P7: Time when it comes to academics and practices.

P5: Managing my time wisely.

P8: I'll have to manage my time as well as for me to be able to reach the deadlines and not go over the due dates.

P7: Balancing everything, like your social life, your personal life, like— everything. Just balance it, just try to balance it.

P4: So, it's either you sacrifice pageants, you sacrifice academics, or you sacrifice social life and for me, it happened to be social life.

Time management is not only the thing that an individual does when they are having a hard time. They could also ask for help just like what Ms. Outspoken and Ms. Crown did. These are the insights of Ms. Outspoken and Ms. Crown:

P4: Be honest with yourself, if you can't do it then don't do it, ask for help, there's no shame to ask for help.

P6: I can't really do it all and I should ask help or otherwise, it's just going to be too overwhelming.

The answers of these participants relate to each other as they have their academics, pageantry, and even their personal time and it would be hard to balance it all. They would need to manage their time wisely, sacrifice their time, or ask for help to balance their workload. The participants showed that time management is a key to better organization when balancing their workload [6]

3.2.2 Gaining moral support

Pageantry includes a lot of challenges, and it could lead to a lot of struggles [7]. The participants mentioned that they feel burdened with the pageantry, academics and that they feel overwhelmed [8]. They also shared that when you feel burdened or you feel that things are getting too hard, always ask for help. They also mentioned that sharing your thoughts and worries with a trusted person can be calming and comforting. It is a reminder that you are not alone, and that people are concerned for your wellbeing. These are the insights of the participants:

P6: I just really had to be more open to the people around me both the teachers, the coaches in both sides that I'm struggling right now, I need help and I need some time off.

P6: Enjoying the time with my friends or sometimes doing my academic works with my friends because my friends keep me calm and happy.

3.2.3 Developing a positive mindset

During the interview, the participants shared their development to develop a positive mindset for pageantry and academics. The participants' struggles helped them develop and made them realize something important that can help them balance pageantry and school especially in life. The participants shared their struggles and difficulties in developing a positive mindset. Most participants also shared that pageantry allows them to construct a positive mentality in pursuing pageantry.

P3: I took things slowly and I just remind myself to just relax and go with the flow.

P4: Don't force yourself, ask for help from other people, don't compare yourself to other people— don't be too hard on yourself.

P6: I realized my worth and that I knew that this is my worth.

P3: Take things slowly to also not to be too hard on myself and know that everything shall pass. I pray because that calms me and also reminds me that to again take things slowly because if there's a will, there's a way.

P1: I still have those insecurities though, but I overcome those by believing in myself, loving myself more.

P2: Having a strong mental state, if you let those words or those insecurity eat you. You're a goner.

P3: I don't really feel insecure these days because pageant helped me realize that I am wonderfully, beautifully made by God so I can be my own standard of beauty.

A person's confidence and sense of self-worth are increased or decreased by understanding

how they value themselves in relation to their thoughts, beliefs, and the environment [9]. Since they struggle to meet the ideal definition, or at the very least, the perfect picture of beauty due to society's standards. Participants developed a positive mindset slowly, they also shared with us the thought that knowing one's worth will help them view themselves more and believe that they can set and achieve their goals; this can also help them give themselves peace of mind [10].

3.3 Insights Drawn Based on the Experiences of the Participants

3.3.1 Pageantry improves character and skills

The participants mentioned in the interview that pageantry has been vital in improving their character and skills. Delving in deeper, they stated that joining pageantries had been a fun, insightful, and fruitful experience. It helped develop a character which, judging by their statements, had been the best versions of themselves. They are willing to speak out, to bring themselves to the audience, and most importantly, help them get out of their comfort zone. They are willing to continue further even though pageantry comes with a lot of downs—which most of the participants are already intimately familiar with. The participants have stated the following:

P2: It builds your character, it builds your values, your morals, and not only that it also builds your connection to the other world, outside of your school.

P7: Discovering more about myself like it really helped me enhance my skills, and the way I present myself to others and you know it really built my confidence and the way that I interact with others or the way I look.

P7: As someone who always joins extracurricular activities, and especially pageantry, like really there's a lot of insights, new perspectives that you can gain.

P2: Don't be afraid, go out of your comfort zone, join pageantries because in the end it'll be fun, you'll gain new experiences and you can always just ask for help to your friends for your academics, so step out of there, don't be afraid, speak what you want to speak, and go have fun! Experience!

P6: Just go for it 'cause overall, the experience will triumph all of the adversities that would come because at least you have something to look back to, and at least you won't regret that you didn't do it.

However, Ms. Crown had a rather negative perspective, as the interviewee emphasized the glum mentality of perceiving beauty and brains as mutually exclusive, which unfortunately, most people believe in [11]. It left Ms. Crown to push themselves into deciding whether being smart or being pretty is more important, to which they expressed in the interview:

P4: I don't know what's up with people thinking that being beautiful and having brains is mutually exclusive like, no! Women can have both at the same time and that's none of your business. But this did really affect me and I was starting to think that "okay, it's either I have to be smart or I have to be pretty".

3.3.2 Pageantry develops support systems

During the interview, the participants shared their insights about developing a support system. They revealed their support systems to be their parents and friends, who are always there helping and supporting them and are considered one of their backbones in pageantry, academics, and personal life.

P4: They're my support system.

P5: They guide me with whatever I do. They give me meaningful advice from choices to everything in life.

P6: They gave me reassurance, and the budget, and the planning, and they helped me with my walk and how I presented myself and the photoshoot and everything and I am really grateful for that.

P4: It's nice to have people who believe in you and to have people who are there for you when you're on stage and you know, you sort of get this confidence that "ah! Ohmygod! There's people cheering for me".

P8: They are the ones that will always have your back and support you, motivate you, or encourage you.

Comparison is such a common thing nowadays, especially with peers and most especially when

beauty comes into play. But with the participants' case, their peers have been nothing but supportive to them and giving them all the support especially in their pageantries. The experiences of the participants have supportive friends and family that they could lean on when joining pageantries and just life in general.

3.3.3 Pageantry needs passion and time management

In joining pageantry passion in what you are doing, and proper time management is essential, considering that many participants have been struggling on balancing pageantry and academic due to lack of time management, it is crucial to practice a more suitable method in managing time in order to achieve a less hectic schedule. With that having passion in what you are doing will push you to be determined and want what's best for you in that situation.

Passion and time management comes hand in hand in creating a more suitable and more effective schedule in order to continue doing what you love without having a hard time balancing with your priorities. Ms. Crown have stated there are certain things that you will have to sacrifice if that is what you want, but then you always have to set your priorities first as a student. Pageantry comes with a great deal of struggles as the previous participants have mentioned but with passion you are able to seek better alternatives and strategies to improve your experiences.

P4: Different things empower different women, right? So, if you want to do pageants, if that's what makes you happy, if that's what makes you confident then go for it, but what I can advise is maybe not right now.

P7: What you should do is to really focus on your academics and if you really want to balance it with pageantry, then just do it smartly like, really have the strength or time to you know manage your time like your schedule and everything.

P5: Time management is a must.

P4: If you really want to join you really have to think of the things you have to sacrifice if you really want to join but for me, it's better to study first.

In accordance with what the participants have experienced, all of them have mentioned time management and putting priorities first. Since all participants are currently in the senior high school level time management is important due to the workloads in school and events / activities in pageantry. Having too much workload and extracurricular activities leads to stress, that may cause losing the will and passion to continue what they love. This is where the practice of good time management comes in [12].

4. CONCLUSION

The lived experiences of the participants being a student and pageant contestant— the participants were able to relive their experiences by telling the researchers their experiences, how they managed and balanced the pageantry and their academics, and what they gained from their experiences. For some, the negative outweighed the positive, but most expressed that they had good and positive gains from their experiences. A recurring thought throughout were: struggles in balancing pageantry and academics, the pressure and expectations, they built great connections and relationships, and that they felt fulfilled in joining. The coping mechanisms of the senior high school students in joining pageants and balancing schoolwork— participants have all mentioned in the previous question that it was hard to maintain and balance their responsibilities, and the likes. This question covers how they coped with the adversities that they experienced, such as: being too overwhelmed with the work, the negative perceptions of other people on them, having to sacrifice things to pursue the other, their schedules with pageantry clashes with their academics, and struggling with insecurities. They overcame these in their own ways, most of them developed positive mindsets despite the adversity they were facing, they also had moral support which was of paramount help. A notable quote from one of the participants, “don’t mind them because at the end of the day you will focus on the crown, not to your enemies.”. The insights drawn based on the experiences of the participants— overall, the participants expressed that they gained such great experiences despite the adversities. They have also mentioned that by joining pageantry, it built their skills, confidence, and it created a character out of them, it also helped them in how they present themselves to others. They also expressed that joining pageants requires much passion and

dedication, and that you need to step out of your comfort zone.

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CONSENT

The participants have the full right to go fully anonymous— with a unique code name during the interview and to deem the personal information revealed about them throughout the interview as confidential. The participants were also given consent letters and agreements that are to be approved and signed by them before they fully take part in the data collection procedure in the research. Both parties— the researchers and participants should be transparent and honest to each other throughout the whole interview process. Lastly, in correlation to the aforementioned consideration, the participants have the right to alter and / or remove any statements they made during the interview. They also have the choice of opting out of the study with prior notice from the researchers.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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