



## THESIS WRITING AS CONDUIT OF BEHAVIOR TRANSFORMATION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

*Thesis writing is one of the major requirements when completing an undergraduate degree in the Philippines. The process of conducting involves multiple phases such as proposal presentation, data collection, writing a report based on the findings, and presenting the manuscript to the panel members. Social Influence Theory was the theoretical framework of the study. The phenomenological design of qualitative research was utilized in this study to identify the behavior transformation among fourth-year students who finished their thesis writing subject. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected in an interview with the selected participants. Active analysis was utilized to determine the themes of behavior transformations. It was found that empathy, modesty, confidence, clarity, and collaboration were the transformed behavior caused by thesis writing. In conclusion, thesis writing not only enhances students' cognitive and psychomotor skills in conducting research but it is also a conduit of behavior transformation among students. This paper recommends having an additional study utilizing in-depth interviews to further dig deeper into the impact of thesis writing. Moreover, a quantitative survey type or research may also be conducted to check behavior transformation in the majority of fourth-year students.*

*Keywords: Behavior Transformation, Thesis writing, Phenomenological, Interview*

### INTRODUCTION

Thesis writing is an integral part of an undergraduate degree in Philippine Education as it is viewed as the culmination of students' academic journey in college in preparation for their careers in the future. One of the roles of higher education institutes is focused on training students to become future leaders. As forthcoming decision-makers, their decisions must be based on evidence. Evidence derived from research may help them to understand the

problem itself, create multiple options to respond accordingly and address the concerns appropriately (Khalid et al., 2020). As mandated by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) of the Philippines, graduates of the course Bachelor of Technical-Vocational Teacher Education (BTVTEd) are expected to “participate in the generation of new knowledge and or in research and development of projects in technical education” (CMO 79. s. 2017). As such, they are required to pass the subjects Technology Research 1 (Methods of Research)

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and Technology Research 2 (Undergraduate Thesis/Research Paper/Research Project).

The journey in undergraduate thesis writing begins with the selection of group members. It is one of the most crucial parts of the process as each member will play a vital role in the project and one member can substantially affect the overall output (Hill, 2021). The actual number of members per group may vary depending on the preference of the students, their professors, and the policy of the academic institutes. They will then be asked to select research topics which are usually based on students' interests, availability of resources, and technical know-how. The selection of topics in the research is crucial since it is necessary to ensure that the proposed will give a significant contribution to the body of knowledge (Escobar & Toquero, 2013). Upon approval of the selected research topic, they will then craft the research questions that will direct their investigation. According to Nuez and Cejas (2016), correctly formulated research questions are necessary to guarantee that the study offers valuable insights and resolves the research problem.

Once their research questions are formulated, the students will then collect data utilizing different methods like surveys, interviews or experiments. Data collection must be relevant to the research question as well as the analysis of the collected data (Villanueva et al, 2013). After data collection, students will then write their thesis following a specific format provided by their academic institution. Their full thesis manuscript will then be evaluated by a panel of faculty members. This will then provide an opportunity for the students to demonstrate their knowledge of their research output and communicate their findings effectively (Roldan & Dugang, 2014)

These tedious processes of thesis writing, it must have a significant impact on student's behavior. Vicerra et al (2019) explained that students who were required to be engaged in an extensive research process were forced to read articles related to the study they are conducting. Moreover, due to time constraints and funding requirements, students deliberately allot time and save money just to accomplish their research. Hobson & Lascelles (2014) discussed that the conduct of research encourages the students to become more reflective which leads to understanding themselves better. It also improves students' communication skills since they are forced to collaborate among their group mates (Kardash, 2013) to produce quality output which will then be presented to their respective panel members. On the other hand, students may feel overwhelmed in the demands of conducting research (Wright, 2015) due to pressure to perform better which may lead to anxiety and self-doubt (Lui, 2018).

These changes in the behavior of the students due to such academic requirements can be anchored to Herbert Kelman's (1958) Social Influence Theory. This theory can be used in the context of thesis writing to examine how social influences may affect students' behavior and attitudes when they are writing their manuscripts. According to this, social influences including conformity, compliance, and internalization can have an impact on people. Conformity plays a role in thesis writing when students are influenced by the people involved in their thesis writing. Students may tend to conform to a writing style imposed by authorities in thesis writing even if they do not fully agree. Compliance, on the other hand, is when students feel pressure to achieve the expectations of their thesis adviser or panel members. Students, even if they do not fully



agree, comply with certain requirements or guidelines in thesis writing. Internalization in thesis writing is evident when the individuals adopt new beliefs and/or attitudes which are parallel to the values and expectations of the belief of their institution. With this, students tend to internalize the values of thesis writing aligned to the expectations, beliefs, and norms of the thesis professor, adviser, panel members, or the community in general.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study utilized the phenomenological research design of qualitative research in determining the change of behavior incurred among the students who underwent thesis writing in BTVTEd strand. Phenomenology as a research design digs deeper on the lived experiences of the participants in a specific phenomenon (Robinson, 2012), which, in this case, their experiences in thesis writing. Participants of the study were selected using purposive sampling (Nikolopoulou, 2022). The participants included in the study are those who underwent a complete thesis writing subject prior to data collection procedures (table 1).

**Table 1**  
*Participants of the study*

Pseudonym	Sex	Brief description of theses
Anna	F	Quantitative Survey method determining students' level of knowledge on a specific phenomenon
Emman	M	Qualitative Method utilizing focus group discussion as data collection strategy
Gene	M	
John	M	Quasi-Experimental comparing traditional and proposed strategy in teaching
Jun	M	
Karla	F	Model Building study derived from interview among teachers

They were the ones who are willing to share their lived experiences on thesis writing. The informal interview was a data collection procedure without the use of interview protocol (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). Participants of the

study were the ones who selected the set-up of the interview based on their preference. Some of the questions posted during the data collection phase were (1) How was your overall experience in thesis writing? (2) What were your experiences with your (a) group members, (b) thesis adviser, (c) thesis professor, and (d) panelists during thesis writing? (3) How do these experiences shape your behavior after your thesis writing? Further questions were posted depending on the necessity to dig deeper into the lived experiences of the participants. An analysis during the data collection was employed. According to Yin (2009), active analysis, or the analysis concurrent with data collection further drives the data to be collected.

*Ethical Consideration.* To abide by the principles of the Data Privacy Act of 2012, pseudonyms were used in reporting the findings of the study. Moreover, brief descriptions of theses of participants of this study were preferred rather than giving the exact title of their study to secure anonymity.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

One of the requirements of undergraduate students in their senior years is the conduct of thesis writing. As such, they are required to form a group of their choice, present a research topic for approval, collect and analyze data based on the approved procedures, and present findings to their panel members. These tasks required the students to adapt to the demands of thesis writing which in turn affected their behavior.

The behavior transformations, focusing on interpersonal skills, are reported in this section. Representative responses, which were already translated into English, of each theme were included after a discussion following the pseudonym of its source.

**1. The behavior change experienced by the participants**

### 1.1. Empathy

It was reported by the participants that there is a necessity to empathize with group mates who are currently enrolled in thesis writing and employed in a job at the same time. Since the college caters to students from the low-income bracket, many, if not all, enrolled students require themselves to have part-time jobs to support their studies. One participant shared that *“as a future educator, it necessitates to understand our students. This is our training for that - empathize with group members who are doing their best to finish their study - John”*. On the other hand, another participant stated that *“We need to understand other people now. We are no longer kids who want an equal share of burdens. Equity in the education system may start from us - Jun”*

Although initially, participants wanted to remove their members from their group as they do not share the same burden of thesis writing, they prefer to empathize with their group mates in the end as long as they can see efforts from their group mates with part-time jobs.

### 1.2. Modesty

Thesis writing requires a lot of patience in writing and re-writing manuscripts. There were cases where most of the works of the participants were scrapped by any of their thesis professors, adviser, or panelists. Nevertheless, they were required to accept the fact that even though they are now in their senior year, there will always be room for improvement. This improvement in research may be achieved by accepting criticisms from professional people involved in their thesis writing journey. Although, at some point, they prefer to refuse the suggestions of their panel or professor using carefully selected words.

*“We need to carefully select our words when discussing with our panel members. They may not accept our argument when we are not using the proper syntax of words when talking to*

*them. This is unlike before when we may just speak whatever is on our mind. -Emman”*

*“During our data collection phase, positive terminologies must be used to gather from professors as we fear that they may back out if we use negative words - Gene”*

### 1.3. Confidence

Students who are not fond of communicating with higher authorities tend to hesitate to ask permission to conduct the study, or requesting for any documents necessary for their study. Karla shared that she had a fear of talking to the higher authorities of the college. As she was not used to it. But since it is a requirement to seek permission from the college officials, she was forced to communicate with them.

*“I’m shy at first, but since it is a requirement I need to seek permission from college officials, I’ve found out that they are very professional, responsive, and respectful. I’m still shy, but still, I can already communicate with them. - Karla”*

### 1.4. Clarity

This theme refers to improved skills in drafting communication letters that are necessary for the conduct of thesis writing. As written and approved request letters are a requirement to validate the whole thesis writing procedure, it is necessary to create a draft of request letters and be revised multiple times by the thesis adviser before sending it to the recipient.

*“We edited our request letters several times until our adviser signed and approved it to be sent to their recipients. We learned a lot in drafting request letters until such time that rejection instances become lower and lower. - Anna”*

### 1.5. Collaboration

Since thesis writing was designed to be



accomplished as a group, collaboration among members is necessary to achieve quality output. Unlike other subjects where tasks can be easily accomplished individually, this subject requires open communication and sharing of ideas as well as resources among members to achieve common goals. Participants shared that through their experience in thesis writing, they learn negotiations and conflict resolutions.

*“Our group argued before about the unequal division of labor. This was the result of a difference in the availability of time and resources. However, we managed to resolve the problem and learned to handle future group problems maturely. - Gene”*

## CONCLUSIONS

Educators must provide an avenue for their students to develop not only their cognitive and psychomotor skills but also their affective behavior. This study provides evidence that the subject “Thesis writing” of students in Bachelor of Technical-Vocational Teacher Education (BTVTEd) is a conduit of change in their social behavior. Through the processes of writing proposals, data-gathering, and defending their final output, students develop a variety of behavioral changes including empathy, modesty, confidence, clarity, and collaboration. These skills may help the students in the long run in their personal and professional lives.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the current study has its limitations in data collection, it is suggested that another study should be conducted utilizing in-depth interviews to gain further insight into the behavioral change among students as an impact of thesis writing. Furthermore, due to the limitation of qualitative studies, a quantitative survey among the students may also be done to check the behavioral change among the majority of the students who underwent thesis writing.

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