

Exploring the Entrance Exam Preparation in the Career Choices of Grade 12 Academic Strand Students

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Abstract. *The current phenomenological research examines the impact of entrance exam preparation on the career choices of Grade XII Academic Strand students at Diplahan National High School. Interviews with 10 Academic Strand students were used in this research to obtain understanding about their preparation strategies, challenges encountered, and coping mechanisms utilized during the exam preparation process. The research indicates that the students heavily depend on online sources, such as practice exams and learning materials, to prepare for the entrance tests. However, the respondents faced difficulties in terms of time management, balancing exam preparation with schoolwork, and staying focused when distracted. The strategies adopted by the students to cope are practicing self-discipline and proper time management. The results indicated that the understanding of the interaction between exam preparation, career options, and coping mechanisms among students is vital in ensuring the effective guidance and assistance of the students during this significant period in their academic life.*

Keyword: Grade 12 Academic Strand Students, Entrance Exam, Preparation, Challenges, Coping Mechanism

Introduction

Standardized tests administered for college admissions are known as entrance exams, and they are governed by national regulations to guarantee equity, openness, and honesty in the hiring process. (Hong Zhu et al., 2014) states that college entrance exams are designed to be fair and consistent across all test-takers and subjects to national rules.

Before graduating, some students were not given enough thought to their options, options for choosing a career to support making a well-informed choice. Sources of influence for the purpose of assisting the student in creating a thorough career plan or outline, mentors or parents could be included in a counseling and discussion circle (Puran Chand, 2014).

Many students face significant pressure when preparing for college entrance exams, which may influence their career choices in both positive and negative ways. One key issue is the impact of exam preparation on career choices. Instead of considering their actual interests and abilities, some students may base their profession choice on the courses they are eligible to take. Students' mental health may be impacted by the strain and stress of entry tests, which may cause them to base their choices more on practicality than enthusiasm.

The initial stage for college students to attend their respective universities and majors is to take the college entrance exam. The development and modification of training techniques and college entrance procedures have an impact on students' post-enrollment college happiness (Y Huang, 2023). It discusses the significance of college entrance exams as a key step in a student's journey to higher education and emphasizes that the process of admission through these exams is not just about getting into college, but it also plays a role in shaping the overall satisfaction a student will feel after enrolling in college.

This study aims to identify what preparations Grade XII Academic Strand students make before taking an entrance exam, challenges they face, and coping mechanisms that can help them overcome challenges. The Grade XII level is chosen because it is the final year of Senior High School. They are at a critical stage of their academic journey where they must make important decisions about their future careers and higher education. These students are actively engaged in entrance exam preparations making them the most appropriate participants of this study. By examining these variables, the study seeks to support Grade XII Academic Strand students in Diplahan National High School in making well-informed career path decisions.

Statement of the Problem

This study focused on the entrance exam preparation in the career choices of Grade XII Academic students at Diplahan National High School, Diplahan, Zamboanga Sibugay of School Year 2024-2025.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What preparations do Grade XII Academic Strand students make before taking an entrance exam?
2. What challenges do Grade XII Academic Strand students face in preparing for an entrance exam?

3. What coping mechanisms do Grade XII Academic Strand students use when faced with challenges in preparing for an entrance exam?

Results and Discussion

This study presents the results and discussion, which include the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the validation on the entrance exam preparation in the career choices of Grade XII Academic Strand students.

Preparations of Grade XII academic strand students before taking an entrance exam

The researchers interviewed different perspectives of Grade XII Academic Strand students, the researchers met and listened to their experiences. Using the information and statements given by each respondent during the interview where each theme arises in each response reflecting their preparations before taking an entrance exam.

Digital Learning. The researchers gathered data from the interviews with the respondents. One to two respondents shared the same theme in terms of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for improved learning. In their statements, they expressed how the technology can help in preparing for an entrance exam. (M1, M4)

"I did self-review through online sources. I also did mock-up tests for myself and utilized artificial intelligence for my own benefit."

(M1, M4 03/06/25)

M1 and M4 expressed the preparations as a Grade XII academic strand student before taking a college entrance exam including doing self-reviews and mock-up tests. The respondents also stated that artificial intelligence can be used in preparing for an entrance exam. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is believed to be able to students learn better and achieve educational goals more effectively. Currently many AI-based innovations are being applied to support the learning process to make it more practical and effective (Fitria, 2021).

Time is Gold. The researchers gathered data from the interviews with the respondents. One to two respondents shared the same theme in terms of the value of time. In their statements, they expressed the importance of effective time management in preparing for an entrance exam. (M2, M3)

"The preparation I make before taking an entrance exam are reviewing my notes and managing my time for resting and studying."

(M2, M3 03/06/25)

M2 and M3 added that managing time for resting and studying is one of the preparations made as a Grade XII academic strand student before taking an entrance exam. The respondents believe that proper time can help in preparing effectively. Time management provides individuals the ways for structuring and controlling their activities. The capacity to manage their time is the foundation of students developing good study habits and strategies for success (Claessens et al., 2004).

Challenges Grade XII Academic Strand students face in preparing for an entrance exam

The researchers interviewed different perspectives of Grade 12 academic strand students, the researchers met and listened to their experiences. Using the information and statements given by each respondent during the interview where each theme arises in each response reflecting the challenges they face in preparing for an entrance exam.

Time Constraints. The researchers gathered data from the interviews with the respondents. One to four respondents shared the same theme in terms of lack of time. In their statements, they expressed how time constraints can be a challenge in preparing for an entrance exam. (M1, M2, M4, M8)

"Preparing for an entrance exam comes with challenges such as managing my study time with other responsibilities"

(M1, M2, M4, M8 03/06/25)

M1, M2, M4, and M8 expressed how balancing time for studying with other responsibilities in preparing for an entrance exam can be a challenge in preparing for an entrance exam. Managing time effectively can be difficult, as one must prioritize studying while still fulfilling other commitments. Good time management is a crucial aspect of academic success. Students who effectively manage their time experience reduced stress and have fewer difficulties balancing work as well as issues related to well-being (Nasrullah & Khan, 2025).

Distractions. The researchers gathered data from the interviews with the respondents. One to two respondents shared the same theme in terms of staying focused. In their statements, they expressed how distraction can be a challenge in preparing for an entrance exam. (M5, M9)

"The challenge that I face in preparing for an entrance exam is that I can get distracted while preparing"
(M5, M9 03/06/25)

M5 and M9 stated that one of the challenge Grade XII academic strand students face in preparing for an entrance exam is distraction. Distractions, whether from social media, entertainment, or other activities make it hard to concentrate on studying. Distractions can significantly hinder the ability to concentrate and retain information. By realizing how important it is to avoid distractions, you can maximize your study sessions that will help you learn more effectively and get ready for future examinations. (Warnell, 2024).

Coping mechanisms of Grade XII Academic Strand use when faced with challenges in preparing for an entrance exam

The researchers interviewed different perspectives of Grade XII Academic Strand students, the researchers met and listened to their experiences. Using the information and statements given by each respondent during the interview where each theme arises in each response reflecting the coping mechanisms they use when faced with challenges in preparing for an entrance exam.

Time Management. The researchers gathered data from the interviews with the respondent. One to three respondents shared the same theme in terms of proper time management. In their statements, they expressed time management as one of the coping mechanisms when faced with challenges in preparing for an entrance exam. (M1, M2, M8)

"My coping mechanism is balancing my time by making an effective schedule"
(M1, M2, M8 03/06/25)

M1, M2, and M8 stated that they manage challenges by organizing their time effectively such as creating a schedule. It helps the Grade XII Academic Strand students stay on track and help them cope. According to Gordon (2023), one of the best time management tips for students is to create a schedule that outlines your daily tasks and responsibilities. This schedule should include time to each particular task like classes, study sessions, or other activities.

Self-Discipline. The researchers gathered data from the interviews with the respondent. One to two respondents shared the same theme in terms of disciplining yourself. In their statements, they expressed self-discipline as one of the coping mechanisms when faced with challenges in preparing for an entrance exam. (M5, M10)

"Self-discipline helps me to overcome challenges I face in preparing for an entrance exam"
(M5, M10 03/06/25)

M5 and M10 expressed that the key to overcoming difficulties while preparing for an entrance exam is self-discipline. The respondents believe that it allows them to maintain focus and consistency. Self-discipline is an invaluable skill to learn and develop over the course of your life and will help you tremendously. As a student, there will always be periods of distractions in your life, which is why it is so important to develop self-discipline to succeed (Hughes et al., 2024).

Conclusion

In exploring the entrance exam preparation of in the career choices of Grade XII Academic Strand students, it is evident that their preparation, challenges they faced, and coping mechanisms all play a significant role in shaping their future academic paths. The respondents utilized various methods such as self-review, time-management, and technological tools to enhance their readiness. However, they also faced challenges, including distractions and time constraints. To overcome these challenges, they relied on self-discipline and effective time management. Entrance exam preparation is more than just an academic requirement for higher education, it serves as a foundation for essential skills such as time management and strategic planning. These skills not only contribute to their success in entrance exams but also help them make informed career choices.

Recommendations

According to the findings of the study, it was identified that preparation for entrance exams has a significant impact on the career orientation of Grade XII Academic Strand students. Various factors such as self-review techniques, time management, distractions, and technology use have a strong impact on their preparation process. Students also face various challenges that need to be addressed through the creation of proper coping mechanisms. To counter these, the authors suggest that students develop systematic and strategic preparation techniques to enhance their exam performance and make wise career choices. Students are advised to develop a well-balanced study schedule with time for relaxation and other activities, enhance their time management

ability to manage academic and personal responsibilities efficiently, and utilize technology and AI tools appropriately to facilitate learning. Self-discipline through the practice of clear goal-setting and adherence to study routine is also important. For parents, it is suggested that a supportive learning environment be created in the home by ensuring that the students have access to a quiet and comfortable space for studying. Teachers should aid students by conducting regular practice tests under simulated examination conditions to enhance time management skills and by reinforcing good study and test-taking techniques. Finally, it is recommended that future researchers carry out more extensive studies to confirm and extend the findings of this study.

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