

### Short Paper

# **JOYrning: The Use of Fun Journals in Promoting Academic Engagement and Resilience among Senior High School Students in Research Writing**

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## **Abstract**

This action research investigated using fun journals to enhance academic engagement and resilience among senior high school students in their group research writing journey. Anchored in the reflection cycle and resilience framework, the intervention involved journaling activities aligned with four learning domains: cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and social. A mixed-methods approach was employed, utilizing quantitative data from a five-part questionnaire and content-based assessments, and qualitative data from teacher journals, student reflections, and observation notes. Findings revealed that the majority of students became more interested in research topics, demonstrated improved collaboration with peers, and showed increased reflectiveness about their learning. Journaling also supported resilience by helping students manage thoughts, emotions, and setbacks. Results suggest that integrating structured journaling as a learning tool promotes deeper engagement and personal growth. This study recommends continued use of fun journals to foster meaningful and resilient learning experiences among senior high school learners.

**Keywords** – journaling, academic engagement, resilience, senior high school

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## INTRODUCTION

Journaling is an empowering educational activity that allows learners to take ownership of their education by reflecting on their individual and shared learning experiences. This metacognitive journey, aligned with the values of critical thinking, self-improvement, and active engagement in learning emphasized by the Philippines Department of Education (DepEd) (2013) in its Vision, Mission and Core Values, fosters not just reflection but also enables learners to gain insights and enhance their skills through critical thinking.

Amidst the pandemic, with the implementation of distance learning modalities, education has become a bit difficult and tedious since conventional face-to-face socialization among the 'front liners of education' – the students and teachers – is prohibited in the Philippines. The situation brought by COVID-19 suddenly changed the educational landscape, which also abruptly changed the learning journey - cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and social development – of students.

As schools have gradually returned to the full implementation of in-person teaching and learning, students' engagement and sound mental health have been prioritized. In line with concerns about mental health, students' resilience is specifically targeted by reinstating the learners through psychosocial activities in the usual practices before the pandemic. This is to ensure that their learning journey can be as holistic as possible, as they are gradually engaged again in the old normal learning set-up, so to speak.

Having observed the wonders of journal writing among students, interest in more learning interventions that cultivate students' reflective learning is the researcher's advocacy. Thus, the fruition of this action research focused on two interdependent concepts: the learning engagement and resilience of senior high school learners, particularly established in their research writing journey, for which most of them protest completing because of technicalities.

The use of so-called fun journals is further expected to nurture students' writing. It is believed to foster learners' organization of their experiences into a structure and being able to critically examine them and, in the process, create a comprehensible narrative (Newman, 2020) that shall boost their understanding of the learning experience itself.

The following diagram (Figure 1) illustrates how this research was carried out. It maps out the flow by which the pertinent variables of the study were examined. As illustrated, students' academic engagement and resilience were expected to be positively swayed using fun journals.

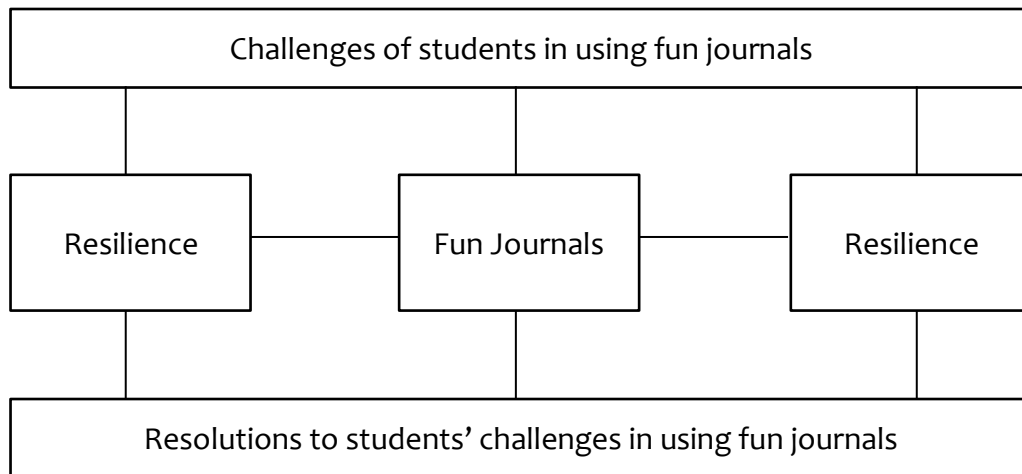


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

## Research Questions

Generally, this research endeavored to foster a worthwhile and less stressful learning journey in research writing among senior high school students.

Specifically, it aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do fun journals with four learning domains engage students in group research writing?
2. How do fun journals with four learning domains promote students' resilience in the new normal?
3. What challenges do students encounter using or doing fun journals?
4. What resolutions can be suggested to offset students' challenges in using fun journals?
5. Is there a significant difference in the students' performance in the series of content-based assessments (CBA) on their understanding of the process of research writing?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Origins and Nature of Journaling*

Writing journals can be considered as old as the discovery of systems of writing. The mere recording of events in history is man's nature to value his experiences. Experiences are the springboards of the process of reflection, from which journaling is anchored. Thus, we always say that we learn from our experiences, they teach us life lessons (Figure 2).

Calderon (2018), drawing from the work of Jackson (2013), suggested a modified reflection cycle, illustrated below, that is basic in the process of journaling, which is "simply

writing down your thoughts and feelings to understand them more clearly” (University of Rochester Medical Center, 2022).

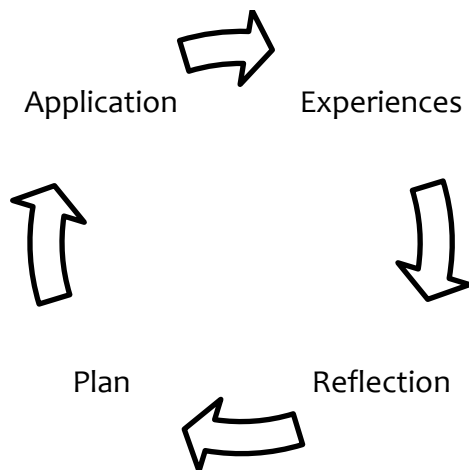


Figure 2. Reflection Cycle

The cyclical diagram illustrates that experiences teach us lessons in life from which we critically analyze and reflect. Planning ensues as we have learned from the experiences to better implement actions in the future so that life can be experienced better and to the fullest.

### ***Student Engagement Through Journaling***

Sanchez (2006, as cited in Wong-Fernandez et al., 2016) specifies the importance of journal writing by emphasizing three kinds of people as regards their engagement with their lives. He pointed out that people could be a moviegoer who only watches events in life happen, an actor who not only watches but also waits for the direction of others before acting, and a scriptwriter who not only watches and acts but also creates the entire story. Of these types of people, Sanchez puts the scriptwriter at the highest level when engagement in life is to be considered. Translated into students' context, journal writing encourages learners to be the scriptwriters of their lives – reflective, active, and engaged. When students are reflective, they learn meaningfully from their experiences.

### ***Types and Formats of Journaling***

Journaling can be of different types, and the most common would be the diary or 'morning pages' as Phelan (2018) calls it. It is where a person writes highlights of his/her daily experiences according to his/her liking. There are types as well that use prompts to easily capture the essence of the experience by providing the idea of focus to the one writing the journal. The latter suggests a more organized format, which can be adopted for classroom use. One organized journal writing is the four-quadrant journal (Calderon, 2022), which considers four phases of the reflection cycle mentioned earlier. Caroll (as cited in

Barth, 2020) noted that the format of journaling can take any form, yet it nurtures students' learning autonomy, as they must dig for meaning from their learning experiences. Journaling supports self-reflection, which is a significant ingredient in enriching the learning process (Pham, Tran, & Nguyen, 2022).

### ***Benefits of Journaling for Holistic Development***

Journaling is multi-beneficial as it not only promotes the intellectual dimensions of learners but at the same time their organizational, psychological, and physical aspects (Barth, 2020). It can likely foster students' resilience besides their good academic standing. Connectedly, journaling can work on two different yet interrelated levels: our feelings and our thoughts (Newman, 2020). Being a hallmark of the so-called self-care movement (Phelan, 2018), it may provide the following advantages along the following: mindfulness, memory, communication skills, sleep, immune system, self-confidence, and IQ.

### ***Journaling as a Tool for Building Resilience***

Resilience is captured within a framework advanced by Hechanova, Waelde, Docena, Alampay, Alianan, Flores, and Melgar (2015) who pointed out the importance of honing the coping skills, such as what students need in journeying a complicated learning and even more disasters. The resilience framework includes finding and cultivating strengths, managing physical reactions, managing thoughts and emotions, seeking solutions and support, positive activities, and moving forward. These, in an integrative way, promote a sense of self-efficacy or confidence, which is crucial for students to face learning challenges. It is, therefore, a noble act for teachers to move for students' development of resiliency, for which journaling may find relevance.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Research Design***

This study employed a blended research approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies within an action research framework, to investigate the efficacy of an intervention aimed at addressing learning barriers and refining teaching practices (Denscombe, 2010; University of Southern California Libraries, 2020).

### ***Participants***

Focused on Grade 12 senior high school students, the research utilized "fun journals" designed across cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and social domains, drawing from educational theories of Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) and Bloom (1956), as summarized by Stapleton-Corcoran (2023).

All students participated in the study, with the primary goal of immersing them in an intervention expected to enhance their learning and improve teaching practices (O'Connor, Greene, & Anderson, 2006). This study did not employ a control group. In line with the action research framework, the intervention was implemented for all students in the class to promote inclusive improvement in teaching and learning practices.

### ***Intervention and Instruments***

The intervention served a dual purpose: enhancing student learning experiences and acting as a data collection tool. Assessment was conducted using a collaboratively developed classroom rubric. Additional data collection tools included a comprehensive five-part questionnaire-checklist to evaluate student engagement in group research writing, resilience-building, challenges faced, and proposed solutions.

Qualitative insights from observation notes, teacher journals, and reflections complemented the quantitative data, providing deeper context to student experiences and resilience, based on the resilience framework of Hechanova et al. (2015).

### ***Data Collection Procedures***

Data collection procedures prioritized obtaining consent from students and parents. Fun journals were administered after each topic, and content-based assessments (CBAs) were administered after each unit. To facilitate remote participation, data collection tools were made accessible through platforms such as Google Forms.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

Ethical protocols were strictly followed, including the securing of informed consent from students and their parents. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the data collection and analysis phases.

### ***Data Analysis***

This study adopted a comprehensive mixed-methods approach to explore and enhance educational practices, aiming not only to validate interventions but also to transform the educational experiences of senior high school students.

Analysis methods included frequency counts, rankings, percentages, and thematic analysis, tailored to address specific research inquiries related to student engagement, resilience, challenges encountered, and academic performance. These analyses aimed to validate the intervention's effectiveness and provide insights for refining educational practices.

## RESULTS

### *Students' Engagement in Group Research Writing Using Fun Journals*

Student engagement is a foundational feature of successful education, encompassing the active participation, enthusiasm, and connection of students to their learning experiences. When students are genuinely engaged, they become more motivated, curious, and eager to explore and acquire knowledge. It is, therefore, very important to foster an engaging learning environment that cultivates a passion for learning and promotes academic success.

Table 1. Engagement in Group Research Writing as Influenced by the Fun Journals

No.	Indicators of Engagement		%	Rank
1	greatly interested in the topics and learning activities	134	89.33	1
2	collaborative with my peers and contribute to group efforts	98	65.33	2
3	positively connected with my classmates and the teacher	94	62.67	3
4	reflective about my learning experiences and outcomes	92	61.33	4
5	punctual in finishing homework or activity sheets and meeting deadlines	86	57.33	5
6	consistent in attending my classes	83	55.33	6.5
7	independent in doing my tasks, as needed	83	55.33	6.5
8	enthusiastic in responding to questions and/or sharing ideas	78	52.00	8
9	constantly prepared for coming to school	71	47.33	9
10	Inquisitive by asking in-depth questions	62	41.33	10

Table 1 shows the frequency counts, corresponding percentages, and ranks of the indicators of engagement in group research writing of the senior high school students as influenced by the use of fun journals.

The learners (134 or 89.33%) considered themselves "greatly interested in the topics and learning activities" in research writing since they have been using or completing their fun journals. Further, 98 or 65.33% of learners have become "collaborative with peers and contribute to group efforts," and 94, or 62.67%, realized that they have "positively connected with classmates and the teacher," while 92 or 61.33% have become "reflective about learning experiences and outcomes".

These results encompass positive feedback toward using or doing fun journals. Having the students greatly interested in the topics and learning activities sparked greater

engagement not just in individual learning but, most importantly, in collaborative work with their peers and the teacher.

### ***Promotion of Students' Resilience in the New Normal Using Fun Journals***

One goal of this study was to investigate and validate students' resilience as impacted by the use of fun journals. This problem results from the fact that students have previously struggled with research writing to the point where they have negatively criticized the learning area. This idea was operationalized in the study as "Joynaling," a contraction of joy and journaling, which refers to a way of finding enjoyment or comfort in keeping a journal.

Table 2 displays the frequencies and corresponding percentages, and ranks of the ten resilience indicators relevant to the study.

Table 2. *Students' Resilience with Fun Journals*

<b>No.</b>	<b>Indicators of Resilience</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Rank</b>
1	Feel good about myself and satisfied with my accomplishments	108	72.00	1
2	Became more resilient in accepting classwork	86	57.33	2
3	I was able to concentrate more on my tasks	83	55.33	3
4	Became more confident when faced with new situations	82	54.67	4
5	Had healthy relationships with my teacher and classmates	80	53.33	5
6	Feel optimistic and seldom worry about our lessons and activities	79	52.67	6.5
7	Became more comfortable with my skill	79	52.67	6.5
8	Developed a sense of purpose and belongingness	73	48.67	8
9	Became more willing to take risks	72	48.00	9
10	Cope with normal stresses	63	42.00	10

It is very fortunate to note that 72% or 108 of the students “feel good about themselves and were satisfied with their accomplishments” in the subject where the fun journals were integrated. On the contrary, there were only 63 or 42% who considered themselves to have "cope with normal stresses".

### ***Students' Challenges Using or Doing Fun Journals***

To amplify the overall quality of instructional support offered to students, an investigation delved into challenges that emerged during the implementation of fun journals, aiming to uncover barriers faced by both teachers and learners in integrating this engaging educational tool into the learning experience.

Table 3 summarizes key findings, highlighting challenges in using fun journals in this study's subject. These insights guide educators in enhancing the impact of fun journals or journaling on student learning and engagement.

Table 3. *Challenges Students Encounter in Doing/ Using Fun Journals*

No.	Challenges Encountered	f	%	Rank
1.	Creativity in responses requires a lot of effort.	93	62.00	1
2.	Prompts are difficult to understand.	62	41.33	2
3.	Responding eats up a lot of time.	57	38.00	3
4.	The English language is used.	53	35.33	4
5.	The desire to duplicate or replicate another's work remains.	46	30.67	5
6.	Internal motivation is lacking	44	29.33	6
7.	The classroom environment is disorderly.	39	26.00	7
8.	Related topics were missed.	36	24.00	8
9.	The teacher's timely feedback is not given.	30	20.00	9
10.	The teacher's support is lacking.	22	14.67	10

It is very apparent from the table that in using or doing fun journals, the majority of the students (93 or 62%) consider "creativity in responses requires a lot of effort." On the other hand, the students find their teachers supportive of their learning experience with the use of fun journals, as fewest (22 or 14.67%) consider "teacher's support is lacking."

### ***Suggested Resolutions to Offset Students' Challenges in Using Fun Journals***

This research extended its reach past the margins of fun journals, aiming to provide material recommendations that cater to the broader practice of journaling, thereby enhancing its relevance and pertinence within various educational backdrops.

Parallel solutions were explored for the aforementioned challenges, aiming to offer purposeful and meaningful resolutions. These findings serve as valuable insights for both students and teachers when faced with distinct learning obstacles, especially those linked to the utilization of enjoyable journals.

Frequencies, percentages, and corresponding ranks are presented in the table to show the resolutions for the challenges students encounter in doing/ using fun journals.

Table 4 exhibits that the majority of the students (86 or 57.33%) perceive that for them to hurdle the challenges they encountered as presented in Table 3, they should have the internal motivation to "... realize how fun journals helps in their learning." This is followed in rank 2 by a near majority (71 or 47.33%) who acknowledge the important role of the teacher in guiding them to creatively and accomplish their fun journals.

Table 4. *Resolutions for the Challenges Students Encounter in Doing/ Using Fun Journals*

No.	Resolutions to Challenges	f	%	Rank
1.	Students should realize how these help in their learning.	86	57.33	1
2.	The teacher goes the extra mile in improving students' creative thinking.	71	47.33	2
3.	Students should ask for clarification from the teacher when necessary.	70	46.67	3
4.	Work independently and seek peer support as needed.	67	44.67	4
5.	Attend classes regularly and avoid absences, if possible.	66	44.00	5
6.	The classroom should be quiet and organized all the time.	59	39.33	6
7.	The timeframe for completing them could be extended.	58	38.67	7
8.	Filipino translation may be provided.	55	36.67	8
9.	Prompts should be simplified.	49	32.67	9
10.	The teacher should return the checked and, if possible, annotated fun journals on time.	44	29.33	10

### ***Students' Performance in a Series of Content-Based Assessments (CBA) on Their Understanding of the Process of Research Writing***

Through the administration of content-based assessments (CBAs), this research aimed to ascertain the influence of incorporating fun journals on student academic achievement. The key focus was to enhance the quantitative validation of their engagement, as indicated by the results derived from the analysis of data obtained through the second part of the questionnaire checklist implemented in this investigation. Such would substantiate the findings gleaned from the analysis of data gathered using the questionnaire checklist and vice versa.

Table 5 presents the average scores achieved by students across the seven 25-item CBAs. Meanwhile, Table 6 presents the outcomes of the repeated-measure t-test concerning the variance in student performance in the CBAs, specifically focusing on their understanding of the research writing process. The mean scores were calculated, followed by the determination of their corresponding MPS values, which were categorized into five distinct tiers.

The table shows that the students have "Outstanding" achievements for CBA 1 (MPS=91) and CBA 7 (MPS=94). This connotes that the students started and ended well in their achievements. Further, the students had a "Very Satisfactory" performance in CBA 3 (MPS=85); while they are only "Satisfactory" (MPS=83) in CBA 4, CBA 5, and CBA 6. In the

last CBA for Quarter 1, the students only performed "Fairly Satisfactory" (MPS=76). Overall, the students had a "Very Satisfactory" (MPS=85) performance in the CBAs.

Table 5. Mean Scores of Students in the Content-Based Assessments (CBAs)

Content-Based Assessments (CBAs)	Mean Scores	MPS	Description
1	22.80	91	Outstanding
2	20.82	83	Satisfactory
3	21.26	85	Very Satisfactory
4	19.00	76	Fairly Satisfactory
5	20.82	83	Satisfactory
6	20.71	83	Satisfactory
7	23.43	94	Outstanding
<b>Combined</b>	<b>21.26</b>	<b>85</b>	Very Satisfactory

MPS Range:

90-100	Outstanding
85-89	Very Satisfactory
80-84	Satisfactory
75-79	Fairly Satisfactory
Below 75	Did Not Meet Expectations

With regards to the data presented by Table 6 on the next page, on the results of the repeated measure t-test between the series of CBAs, improvement in understanding of the process of research writing, particularly from the topics covered by CBA 4 to CBA 5 and from CBA 6 to CBA 7 is evident.

Table 6. Repeated Measure t-test Results on the Difference in the Students' Performance in the Series of Content-Based Assessments (CBA) on their Understanding of the Process of Research Writing

Content-Based Assessments (CBAs)	Mean Difference	t	Sig (2-tailed)
CBA 1 vs. CBA 2	1.980	7.028**	.000
CBA 2 vs. CBA 3	-0.441	-1.215	.226
CBA 3 vs. CBA 4	2.263	5.162**	.000
CBA 4 vs. CBA 5	-1.816	-4.666**	.000
CBA 5 vs. CBA 6	0.105	0.533	.595
CBA 6 vs. CBA 7	-2.717	-17.087**	.000

\*Significant at the 0.05 level of significance

\*\* Significant at 0.01 level of significance

The computed t-values of -4.666 and -17.087, respectively, denote an increase in the student's performance in the aforesaid CBAs. Such an increase is highly significant, with similar computed significance values of .000 that outrightly reject the set null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the students' performance in the series of content-based assessments (CBA) on their understanding of the process of research

writing. Thus, the use of fun journals in those instructional episodes promoted learning positively.

While computed significance values show that there are significant differences between CBA 1 and CBA 2 and between CBA 3 and CBA 4, they don't show an increase in students' performance since corresponding computed t-values are positive (7.028 and 5.162), which means that the mean scores of the students decreased.

Moreover, the performance of the students in CBA 2 and CBA 3 does not differ significantly. The same goes between CBA 5 and CBA 6, which means that students' performances are comparable.

## **DISCUSSION**

### ***Students' Engagement in Group Research Writing Using Fun Journals***

The ability to adapt, persevere, and rebound from difficulties encountered in learning is referred to as resilience in learning. It presupposes advancing a mindset and a set of techniques that allow learners to overcome challenges and continue their educational journey despite setbacks.

It is ostensible in the observation of the teacher that three important interactions that underscore meaningful student engagement are present: between/ among the learners, between the learners and the teacher, and between the learners and the learning materials. With these interactions visible, the learning process was enriched (Pham et al., 2022) for it created a multifactorial learning environment that involves all necessary elements – the teacher, the students, and the learning materials.

Further, the students being reflective of their learning experiences or works indicates higher-order thinking as they have become more conscious of their learning journey. Doing or using the fun journals nurtured their learning towards individual learning (Carol as cited in Barth, 2020), starting from developing an internal motivation of the meaningfulness of the topics and learning activities provided to them and proceeding toward learning with others, their teachers, and classmates, for a more colorful learning experience.

The aforesaid findings harmonize with what Table 1 further shows that the majority have also been "punctual in finishing homework or activity sheets and meeting deadlines" (86 or 57.33%) "consistent in attending classes" (83 or 55.33%), "independent in doing tasks, as needed" (83 or 55.33%), and "enthusiastic in responding to questions and/or sharing of ideas" (78 or 52%). These were indications of students' engagement as they become more in control of their learning experiences. Journaling increases students' learning autonomy as they tend to learn from their learning, i.e., with their entries/records in their journals,

they become motivated to seek improvement as with a storyline a scriptwriter develops (Sanchez as cited in Wong-Fernandez et.al., 2016).

On the other hand, fewer students have become "constantly prepared in coming to school" (71 or 47.33%) and "inquisitive by asking in-depth questions" (62 or 41.33%). These only denote that the students still had periods of learning gaps for which the teachers' intervention is warranted. Students will always be students, and at some point, they become sluggish at work. However, such instances are a reminder of the point by which instruction is fashioned – the learners are not perfect, and that room for improvement is always present.

### ***Promotion of Students' Resilience in the New Normal Using Fun Journals***

The anticipated finding supports the proposition of the resilience framework advanced by Hechanova et al. (2015) that interactively promotes self-efficacy or confidence, which students direly need to face learning challenges in coming back to in-person learning after two school years in distance learning setups. This efficacy can be attributed to the students' immersion in the creative process while completing the fun journals. This supports the findings of Lim, Tan, and Tsai (2020), which indicate that engagement in the creative process is positively associated with creativity, an essential element in completing the fun journals.

The study revealed a number of students who still have the difficulty of coping with normal stresses could be attributed to their gradual return to in-person learning following two years of remote education. However, it is gratifying to discover that the students' mindset was positively influenced by the use of fun journals. These outcomes corroborate the achievement of the intended goal of the implemented intervention.

Nonetheless, still, a majority of the students were “resilient in accepting their class work” (86 or 57.33%), “able to concentrate more on their tasks” (83 or 55.33%), “more confident when faced with new situations” (82 or 54.67%), “having a healthy relationship with their teacher and classmates” (80 or 53.33%), “optimistic and seldom worry on our lessons and activities” (79 or 52.67%), and “more comfortable in their skills” (79 or 52.67%). Essentially, the evidence shows that the majority of students have not only survived challenges but have excelled in them. Their steadfast commitment to effectively navigating the educational terrain is demonstrated by their capacity to adapt, focus, form connections, keep a positive attitude, and develop their talents. These results serve as a reminder that even in trying circumstances, resilience and a positive outlook can promote remarkable learning success.

Fewer have "developed a sense of purpose and belongingness" (73 or 48.67%) despite a majority who considered themselves to have healthy relationships with their teacher and classmates. Further, fewer "became more willing to take risks" (72 or 48.00%), which denotes that the majority of the students fear failing. The findings indicate that some of

the students possibly still struggle to find meaningful connections with others in their classes, even though they consider their relationship with their classmates and teacher to be healthy, as shown in Table 2. The students having some sense of fear of failure could be a two-edged sword as it can withhold them from trying and showcase their confidence, or can build them to be more careful in doing things.

### ***Students' Challenges Using or Doing Fun Journals***

The students acknowledging that creativity in their responses to the fun journal templates requires a lot of effort, indicate that they also acknowledge that not all of them are as creative as their other classmates. This is perhaps due to their fear of taking risks, as they fear failing, as pointed out previously with the findings in Table 2. It is said that fear of failure hinders creativity (Faculty of Technology, Art and Design, 2023), much less taking a lot of effort in displaying it. It is good to note, nonetheless, that as the teacher is a "guide on the side," they could always implement possible interventions to uplift students' creativity and learning while having their journals.

Further, only a few students are challenged by the time constraint, language used, desire to duplicate or replicate another's work, lack of internal motivation, disorderly classroom environment, missed related topics, and the teacher's timely feedback. While these registered fewer students, they still require purposive intervention by the teacher to increase the potential benefit of fun journals in students' overall learning.

These revelations highlight the necessity of an all-encompassing strategy that includes better time management techniques, language support, encouraging originality, enhancing motivation through personalized learning, maintaining structured classrooms, bridging knowledge gaps, and ensuring timely teacher guidance to create a more favorable and efficient learning environment.

### ***Suggested Resolutions to Offset Students' Challenges in Using Fun Journals***

The investigation focused on identifying intentional and constructive approaches to address the challenges faced by the students. By doing so, the study strives to equip students and teachers with informed techniques to navigate specific learning difficulties, particularly regarding the implementation of fun journals.

Any learning challenge that arises is resolved successfully when both the teacher and students work hand in hand. That is the very essence of the so-called "teaching-learning process." However, the teacher's role is very significant in guiding the students toward successful learning, in this case with the use of fun journals.

The results of the study underscore students and teachers working together, a powerful resolution, to maximize the use of fun journals in enriching the research writing journey.

## ***Students' Performance in a Series of Content-Based Assessments (CBA) on Their Understanding of the Process of Research Writing***

The results are indicative that the majority of the students, if not all, have gained passing to higher scores in the CBAs, which are summative assessments measuring students' conceptual understanding of the research writing process as impacted by the utilization of fun journals. Harmonizing with what Newman (2020) pointed out, the use and completion of fun journals the students have not only touched their psyche but at the same time boosted their academic standing. The mindset of the students was positively swayed with the intervention, had uplifted their learning engagement, which in the long run translated to good scores in summative assessments.

The intervention used motivated the students well in focusing on their learning experiences, particularly on the lessons and related materials that the teacher provided them with throughout.

The changing performance of the students across CBAs may be influenced by factors like their engagement level, study habits, and the effectiveness of teaching methods used in each assessment period. Therefore, the results of the repeated-measure t-test underscore how teachers can enhance student learning experiences and refine teaching practices through the use of fun journals.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Fun journals in research writing significantly enhance student engagement, foster collaboration, and strengthen teacher-student relationships, particularly noted during the transition to in-person learning. They contribute to building student resilience and confidence, crucial for academic success. Students value the creative freedom provided by fun journals and benefit from teacher guidance, resulting in improved academic performance over time.

To optimize their impact, continuous teacher support, resilience-building strategies, personalized interventions, and sustained use of dynamic teaching practices are recommended. These efforts, alongside promoting collaborative learning environments and empowering student autonomy and creativity within fun journals, ensure lasting educational benefits and enriched learning experiences.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

With a significant majority of learners showing heightened interest, improved collaboration, and reflective learning behaviors, fun journal use in group research writing offers a promising pedagogical approach to enhance student engagement and build resilience in the classroom. It proved to be an effective tool in transforming traditionally

challenging tasks into enjoyable and meaningful learning. Educators should use this strategy to deepen learners' connection with the subject, peers, and teachers, fostering a collaborative and supportive environment.

The use of fun journal nurtures learning confidence and perseverance necessary for students to navigate post-pandemic education meaningfully. Students creative and reflective engagement in fun journals, build their self-efficacy and ownership in their learning journey. However, the challenges related to creativity, clarity of prompts, and time strains, warrant responsive instructional design. Teachers must provide differentiated support, clearer guidance, and timely feedback to sustain student motivation and creativity.

Having proven that fun journal use result in positive learning outcomes, its sustained use as with other reflective journaling tools is warranted. Such innovative and student-centered strategy, which does not only promote academic engagement but also resilience, can bridge learning gaps and transform classrooms into spaces of curiosity, collaboration, and growth.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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The study did not receive funding from any institution.

## **DECLARATIONS**

### ***Conflict of Interest***

The study followed guidelines to ensure transparency, integrity, and disclosure of conflicts of interest.

### ***Informed Consent***

Parental consent was secured, and students were informed of procedures without revealing the research intervention to preserve authenticity.

### ***Ethics Approval***

The study had ethical approval, ensuring participant welfare, proper citation, and adherence to anti-plagiarism guidelines.

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Joemel P. Calderon is a Master Teacher II at San Felipe High School, San Manuel, Tarlac, Philippines. He has been a public school teacher since 2005. He served as a Junior High School teacher for 11 years and has been teaching research and social science courses in the Senior High School since 2016. This is his seventh action research since he began conducting research in 2015. His research interests include reflective learning, assessment, and student empowerment and engagement.