

Talk, Assist, Tap and Power-Up (TATAP) System: Its Effect on The Emotional Skills and Academic Performance of Students At-Risk of Dropping Out

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Abstract — The study aimed to determine the effect of the Talk, Assist, Tap, and Power-up (TATAP) system on the emotional skills and academic performance of the Student At-Risk of Dropping Out (SARDO) at Santiago National High School, Santiago, Barotac Viejo, Iloilo. The respondents were the 27 identified SARDOs for the school year 2023-2024. The study utilized an adopted survey questionnaire and employed statistical tools such as Mean and Standard Deviation to assess the level of emotional skills before and after the TATAP system intervention. The results showed an increase in the respondents' emotional skills following the implementation of the intervention. The study included a Focus Group Discussion, and the qualitative results were presented through thematic analysis. The identified themes across groups highlighted key concepts that contribute to the effectiveness of the TATAP system in improving the academic performance and emotional skills of the identified Students At-Risk of Dropping Out. It is recommended that the Talk, Assist, Tap, and Power-up programs, initiatives, activities, and projects be adopted by Santiago National High School and other public secondary schools within the Schools Division of Iloilo.

Keywords — *TATAP System, Emotional Skills, Academic Performance, Students At-Risk of Dropping Out, Thematic Analysis*

I. Introduction

The ongoing problem of school dropouts continues to be a global educational crisis, with increasing rates across different regions despite numerous efforts. In the U.S., dropout rates rose by 1.19%, while the European Union averages 10.2%. Australia's senior year attendance fell from 90% in 2014 to 86% in 2022. Developing areas like Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern and Western Asia report dropout rates of 42% and 33%, respectively. The Philippines has the highest dropout rates among ASEAN countries, with 6.38% in elementary school and 7.82% in secondary school. Emotional Intelligence (EI) has been recognized as a vital factor in academic success, with studies by Goleman, Ogundokun, and Adeyamo, and MacCann et al. demonstrating its strong link to performance.

Santiago National High School in Barangay Santiago, Barotac Viejo, Iloilo, serving 422 learners, reported 25 cases of habitual non-attendance and 27 Students At-Risk of Dropping Out (SARDO) in the third quarter of SY 2022–2023. Home visitation, remediation, parental engagement, and peer tutoring were used to address absenteeism.

However, the school recognized the need for a more structured and empathetic intervention. Project Talk, Assist, Tap and Power-Up (TATAP) was launched to support SARDOs through emotional empowerment and academic improvement, aligned with DepEd Orders No. 39, s. 2016 and No. 40, s. 2012. TATAP advocates child protection and aims to reduce dropouts, increase retention, and enhance achievement, offering SARDOs renewed opportunities to embrace learning. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the level of emotional skills of the identified SARDOs in Santiago National High School before and after implementation of the TATAP system?
2. What are the experiences in the TATAP system encountered by the identified SARDOs in Santiago National High School?
3. How can the TATAP system be used in overcoming challenges and problems encountered by the identified SARDOs in Santiago National High School?
4. What actions should be undertaken after the conduct of the study?

II. Methodology

The study employed the quantitative -qualitative approach using the action research design utilizing the adopted Survey Questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

A pre-test measured the determination of the emotional skills before giving the intervention and a post-test after giving the intervention using the Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT). The SSEIT is a method used to measure general emotional level (O'Connor et al., 2019). Research indicates that trait EI is a strong predictor of effective coping with life stressors (e.g., Austin et al., 2010).

The numerical data provided the researchers with insights into the emotional skills, which were significant for the generalizability of the study.

To obtain additional data and a detailed understanding of the experiences, problems, and challenges encountered, as well as the intervention's effects, the researcher conducted a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). This underscored the respondents' academic performance.

According to Nyumba T. et.al (2018), Focus Group discussion is frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues.

Participants and/or Sources of Data and Information

The study involved twenty-seven (27) learners (7 males and 20 females) from Grades 7 to 12 at Santiago National High School for SY 2023–2024, identified as Students At-Risk of Dropping Out (SARDO). Using purposive sampling (Bernard, 2002; Patton, 2002), participants were selected based on failing grades, habitual absenteeism, and difficult circumstances (e.g., pregnancy, financial issues, suicidal attempts). Records from advisers, the Guidance Office, the Discipline Committee, and Barangay Help Desks supported identification. Two Focus Group Discussions were held, each with five randomly chosen participants.

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Data Gathering Methods

The study followed three stages: Research Preliminaries, Data Collection, and Data Analysis. In the preliminaries, researchers prepared for the pre-test, intervention phases, post-test, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Approval from the school head was secured, and orientations were conducted for both respondents and their parents to explain the study's nature and purpose. Instruments were prepared for emotional skill testing and FGD.

During Data Collection, the Shutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test was administered as a pre-test and post-test to assess the Emotional Skill Level of 27 identified Students At-Risk of Dropping Out (SARDOs). After the intervention, FGDs were conducted with 10 randomly selected participants, divided into two groups. Interviews used researcher-made questions and were guided by Showcat and Parveen (2017), who emphasized interviews as tools for capturing in-depth perspectives. Responses were documented through writing, video, and audio recordings.

For Data Analysis, numerical data from pre- and post-tests were examined using Mean and Standard Deviation to determine changes in Emotional Skill Levels. Qualitative data from FGDs were transcribed from Hiligaynon to English and analyzed using thematic coding, following Braun and Clark's (2015) framework for systematic qualitative analysis. All data were rigorously reviewed to ensure accurate conclusions and sound recommendations.

III. Results and Discussion

Descriptive

Level of Emotional Skills of the Identified SARDO's Before and After the Implementation of the TATAP System

The emotional skill level of the 27 SARDOs at Santiago National High School was “high average” prior to the intervention ($x=106.34$, $SD=6.89$). After implementing Project TATAP, their emotional skills increased to a “strong” level ($x=124.94$, $SD=5.37$). This supports Taylor et al. (2017), confirming that school-based emotional competence programs can improve stress management, mental health, and decrease risky behaviors.

Table 1: Emotional Skill Level of SARDOs Before and After the Intervention

Emotional Skill	N	Mean	SD	Emotional Skill Level
Pre-test	27	106.34	6.89	High Average ES
Post-test	27	124.94	5.37	Strong ES

*Keys to interpretation: 69 or less: Developing, 70-89: Needs improvement, 90-99: Low Average, 100-109: High Average, 110-119: Competent, 120-129: Strong, 130 and Above: Significantly Strong

Thematic Analysis

Experiences in the Implementation of Project Talk, Assist, Tap and Power-up

Experience promotes growth by introducing new skills, insights, and wisdom, as reflected in the proverb “Experience is the best teacher” (Merton, 2023). The theme “Enjoyable” stood out strongly, with participants expressing that the TATAP intervention was fun and helped them succeed by developing their skills and abilities. Mae shared how Guidance Hour made her feel listened to and understood during a tough time. Positive feelings like enjoyment boost learner satisfaction and engagement. Tracy Brower notes that happiness can come from learning and personal growth. Con-Con appreciated the regular reminders and felt empowered during the CICL symposium. Lea valued being listened to and receiving thoughtful items from the TATAP office. Mekai mentioned that the program helped her overcome absenteeism and feel valued. These enjoyable experiences, especially Guidance Hour, support Bauld’s (2021) findings that happiness improves student motivation and academic success.

Coping up with the Challenges Encountered by the Students At-Risk of Dropping Out

Under the TATAP intervention, participants experienced a profound shift—one that reflects the theme of enlightened and guided. The concept of enlightenment, rooted in reason and self-awareness (Bruce, PhD), emerged clearly in their responses. Many learners, initially on the verge of quitting, found renewed hope and motivation. Eyan, for instance, realized the value of

education in breaking the cycle of poverty, while Angelica, a single mother, was inspired to finish senior high school and pursue work abroad. These moments of clarity illustrate how enlightenment helped them reframe their circumstances and envision a better future.

Equally important was the sense of being guided. Frequent teacher check-ins and reminders were perceived not just as routine but as acts of care that encouraged learners to embrace schooling. According to the Teachers Institute, adapting to one's environment is key to success, and guidance fosters this adaptability. Kriz, who struggled with shame and exclusion, found strength through consistent support and began to ignore negative perceptions. Jea, burdened by her parents' separation and suicidal thoughts, expressed deep gratitude for the love and guidance she received, leading to emotional clarity and acceptance. These experiences show how being enlightened and guided empowered SARDOs to reclaim their educational paths with resilience and purpose.

Views Towards the Talk, Assist, Tap, and Power-up (TATAP).

The Hiligaynon term TATAP, meaning “to look after” or “attend to” (PinoyDictionary.com), embodies the core of the intervention—highlighting that every learner is a growing individual who deserves purpose, care, and second chances. In teaching and learning, TATAP affirms that love, support, and understanding are essential, especially for students facing challenges like dropout risks or troubled home lives. Zakrzewski (2012) emphasized that the greatest thing a teacher can do is to care and understand, a sentiment echoed throughout the participants' experiences. This care translated into academic growth, as reflected in the theme of good grades and feeling good about myself. Teenagers often lack self-awareness, which is crucial for personal learning and goal-setting (Palmieri, 2012). Through TATAP, participants began to see themselves more clearly, leading to improved performance and motivation. Rowena shared that despite her condition, she no longer had failing grades and could now focus on her assignments. Nicole, once feeling uncared for, found meaning in the program and saw her grades rise, saying she finally felt important.

The intervention awakened strengths in learners who were once on the verge of academic withdrawal. Eurich (2018) notes that self-awareness boosts confidence, creativity, and decision-making—qualities that emerged in Eyan, who recognized his emotional growth and academic improvement. Mekai appreciated the Guidance Hour, noting her grades rose from 81 to 85. Angelica, once focused solely on survival, now saw education as key to her future, expressing joy in knowing her goals and valuing school beyond basic needs.

Reflection played a crucial role in this transformation. Ghanizadeh (2017) found that connecting academic knowledge with lived experiences deepens understanding, while Hamilton and Mallett (2018) showed that experiential learning environments enhance academic success. TATAP provided this space for reflection, allowing learners to connect with themselves, their goals, and their potential—making the intervention not just good for their grades, but good for their lives.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions have been perceived:

1. The SARDOs emotional skills before the implementation of TATAP system is high average however, after the implementation, the SARDO's develop strong emotional skills. Therefore, it is concluded that an appropriate intervention which provides plan and clear steps in managing behavior and reflective can improve an individual's emotional skills.
2. It is noted that the SARDOs experienced enjoyment, enlightenment and guidance in TATAP system, therefore the intervention is facilitating development and improvement on the emotional and academic status.
3. In general view, the Talk, Assist, Tap and Power-up system is an effective system of intervention for the Student At-Risk of Dropping- Out where perceivable development on emotional skills and academic performance has been shown.

V. Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the results and conclusions of the study:

1. The school personnel can make use of an intervention that provides improvement to the emotional skills and academic performance for a struggling or learner in difficult situation.
2. Intervention that is designed for the drop-out reduction program should be implemented and sustained.
3. The Public School District Supervisor, School Heads and Teachers are encouraged to promote and endorse the implementation of Talk, Assist, Tap and Power-up system as intervention to reduce if not totally eradicate the drop-outs in each school.
4. To lessen the problem on school drop-outs, school heads and teachers are recommended to conduct other action researches or to replicate this study to test and validate further results.

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