

# The Excalibur: Lived Experiences of Nursing Students with Academic Setbacks

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**Abstract** Academic failure was one of the most significant challenges that students confront during their academic years. This study was carried out to uncover how the participants' lived experiences transitioned as they experienced an academic setback. The study utilized a qualitative descriptive design specifically Husserlian Phenomenology. The eight participants were chosen through purposive sampling with the approval of the Ethics Review Board. The data was gathered from February to March of 2023. In the analysis of data, the researchers utilized Thematic Analysis. This study revealed four themes: Forging in the Sand, Tempering through the Fire, and Folding Along Heat sums up into a phenomenon called, "A Sword's Might". They were the metal, the student nurse, which keeps on being smithing and continuing to overcome academic setbacks. They have been forged, where all of their experiences were like metal that combined to become a sword then they were tempered through the fire where they now use the heat of coping mechanisms and motivations to continue. And they were folded by negative experiences combined and heated with learnings and realizations that infuse all the properties and become a mighty sword. Thus, it makes them the mighty sword, Excalibur, which was built with blood, sweat, and tears of the student's experiences. The sword was the student; they were forged, tempered, and folded to become a mighty and strong one. Their setbacks were what they hold onto to continue and they become the worthy sword that was sharp and whole after all the process they have been through.

**Keywords** Academic Setbacks, Nursing Students, Excalibur

## 1. Introduction

"Everyone was indeed a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to go up to a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it was stupid" by Albert Einstein (Pettigrew, 2022). Every one of us has unique skills, talents, and intellectual capacity. Someone may excel in the area of the academic field, but others excel more in skills and practices rather than in theories alone. Academic setbacks were common, particularly when experiencing significant changes, such as the transition into college, illness, a move to a new place, illness, and changes in your relationships with family or loved ones, or shifts in your financial situation (Berkeley, 2022). Nursing colleges were recognized as stressful environments that often positively affect students' academic performances and psychological well-being. Literary sources of stress were long hours of study, numerous activities, incomplete tasks, and lack of free time which can lead to academic setbacks (Shanmugam, 2019).

According to Gardner's Theory, these differences challenge an educational system that says that everyone can learn the same way and with the same materials and that a uniform was a universal measure that suffices to test student learning (Cornerstone University, 2018). These modifications in the learning capacities, ways, and styles of every student and other influencing factors significantly impact their academic performance in the educational environment. The academic performance of nursing students can be influenced by different factors within the school, in the clinical area of duties, and in their homes.

Setbacks were slight deviations from the path you thought you had to take until you come to the path you were meant to take (Biggs, 2020). Some common setbacks include: struggling to keep up with courses, failing to meet personal academic goals, failing a course, academic probation, or academic suspension (Academic Success Centre, 2022). It was impossible if a nursing student faces no struggle, difficulty, or setback as he or she deals with the academic journey. If they ever face some setbacks in their studies right now, they should not be ashamed because all students encounter different difficulties. It only differs on the level of difficulty and on the coping mechanism strategies to be resilient from those struggles present. Once a student accepts

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and endures a setback, it was also the time to formulate effective strategies for coping.

Globally, the learning poverty indicator shows a proportion of 10-year-old children who cannot understand and read a short, age-appropriate text (WBG, 2022). The reality that many education institutions in the developing world lack information on who was learning and who was not was a significant factor in the persistence of the learning problem. It was challenging for them to take action as a result. Schools and teachers must ensure that students have more than the essentials of reading and writing because it was still determined what skills the future professions will require. Students must be able to analyze data, generate opinions, be creative, communicate effectively, work cooperatively, and be resilient.

In an international setting, in Ardabil Province in Iran, “Working with an informed and education-oriented nurse in a clinical learning environment can help reduce nursing students’ stress levels” (Moghaddam, 2020). The nursing students’ learning may be painful because of the lack of nursing staff for education. Generally, an environment where staff has a positive attitude, were happy and behave friendly, and were willing to teach and mentor students positively impact the student’s learning. Any educational institution’s success was determined by how well its students perform academically or how well they meet the requirements. Academic failure among nursing students was a topic that was gaining more attention internationally due to its financial implications and detrimental impacts on the supply of future nurses in various healthcare systems (Dube, 2018).

Nursing students face numerous challenges in learning in clinical settings. The lack of proper hospitalization for students’ learning from nurses, the experience of inappropriate social norms in the clinical setting, and nurses’ lack of time due to a shortage of nursing staff to meet the nursing student’s educational needs lead to the disruption of clinical education and disruption of student-nurse relationships (Jafari, 2020). Clinical education was a vital part of nursing education, and nursing staff plays an essential role in nursing students’ learning. Lacking nursing staff can affect students’ academic learning, leading to incomplete clinical learning and appropriate skills.

According to the article “Why do students fail? – Faculty’s Perspective,” many studies were conducted to determine why students fail despite educational technology’s more significant modern influence. The absence of preparation and effort, lack of motivation and perseverance, poor time management, and many other external factors were observed and listed (Edsys, 2022). Many students approach their studies with an easy mindset and do not feel the importance of proper preparation. This was one of the main reasons many students fail despite having all the top-class educational facilities. The lack of motivation and interest, the cause of not being active learners, was another reason why some students fail. Lack of effort was another crucial reason student fail and do not see any progress in their lifetime.

Studies suggest that the learning crisis was a teaching crisis. For students to learn, they need great teachers—but many education systems pay less attention to what teachers know and knowledge, what they do in the classroom, and some cases, whether they even show up (Saavedra, 2019). However, for many nursing students, there were dedicated and passionate educators in every nation who, despite difficulties, enhance and improve their lives. They overcome obstacles and foster learning with enthusiasm, creativity, and perseverance. Students with a previous diploma of enrolled nursing and international students had a lower clinical performance. Students identified that a comprehensive orientation, interactive curriculum, formal and informal support structure, and educator qualities influenced their academic and clinical performance (Fooladi, 2022). A supportive learning environment and an engaging curriculum can improve students’ academic performance, clinical performance, and preparedness for practice. This means that the above factors were essential for nursing students to excel in their academic and clinical performance, which they eventually need in their chosen profession.

The projected shortfall of nurses in the Philippines in 2030 was expected to be 249,843 unless more significant investment was made to retain them in the Philippine health sector (Tanggol, 2020). In this case, the young nursing students entered nursing school with all their inspirations and experiences during the surge of the pandemic in order for them to be somebody to render service in the healthcare setting. As they were in the process of learning, they face a lot of struggles and fears that they need to overcome. This was where the researchers want to focus on their lived experiences and the difficulties they face along their learning as they continue to venture into this nursing journey. In the recently concluded Philippine Nursing Licensure Examination (PNLE), PRC announced that 18,528 out of 24,903 or 74.40% of the total examinees passed the November 2020 PNLE. This implies that the urgency and need for nurses in every corner of the world were significant.

In Region 1, Director Aquino stated, “We will investigate the readiness and capabilities of teachers across all curriculums. We will examine materials and appropriateness of materials (Yparraguirre, 2021).” Complete materials for academic learning can provide adequate skills, experiences, and knowledge to all nursing students. The proper equipment for simulation and demonstration of the clinical activities and procedures dramatically affects students’ performance as they enter the clinical settings. There were different situations, scenarios, and things in the academic life of every student that were on the verge of lows and cons, which sometimes delay their journey toward success. Other students excel whatever the situation they have in life and still can get an A+ grade. Nevertheless, others still need help to cope even with all the discussions, learning materials, modules, and manuals given.

In a local setting, in the City of San Fernando, La Union, the nursing schools adhere to the CMO No. 04 series of 2020 for flexible learning to guide students during the pandemic.

And joint memorandum no. 2021-001 on the guidelines of the conduct of Related Learning Experiences of Nursing Students during the pandemic. With this, the Union Christian College adheres to it as its basis. The school continues to monitor students with academic setbacks, encourage them to enroll, pass their subjects, and motivate them to succeed. As Balita (2021) stated, passion was when you put your heart into your work. Moreover, by the story of Florence Nightingale, it may have happened in the past, but such pasts connect us to our hearts, and the heart, when we put into what we do, becomes our passion, and passion was a beautiful secret of one's success (UCC, 2022). Academic setbacks were not an obstacle to continuing the studies and achieving the dream of success. Therefore, this study was significant in understanding nursing students' experiences with academic setbacks. It served as a basis to effectively give and conduct learning to students more pleasantly and beneficially. Understanding the concept would improve the ability to look into the students' current situations. This study was beneficial to the different agencies and institutions, for it will guide the research and development efforts in the country and catalyze academic improvement. Moreover, its findings will be vital to produce efficient and quality nurses. This will be an eye-opener to the academe, as this phenomenon guides and manages the needs of these students in complex situations.

### Researcher's Background

The researchers believed that there were nursing students who were worried because of the academic setback that they were in. They felt that nursing students were nervous about being unable to pass again and left behind. Researchers believe that these academic setbacks make nursing students feel pressured and stressed and more challenged to finish their courses and follow their dream profession. Based on the researcher's observations, environmental scanning, and experiences, they decided to study the lived experiences of nursing students with academic setbacks.

The researchers considered it essential to understand why some students cannot recover following setbacks, become demotivated, and experience adverse outcomes. They explored their lived experiences to look more deeply at their situation and developed ideas and strategies that benefit the nursing students. On the other hand, the researchers believed that nursing students understood and prepared themselves to face any challenges in their life and eventually reach their goals.

### Theoretical Lens

This study utilized the Experiential Learning Theory (1984) of David Kolb as the backbone of the study. "Learning by experiencing" was the basis of this theory. Experiential learning showed that the best way to learn things was by having experiences. The theory has four central concepts. These were experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting upon an experience. These concepts addressed the stages of experiential learning theory, which starts with learners having a new experience. After having a

"real" experience, learners now reflect on the experience and then proceed to the higher stage and can think of possible ways to feel the experience. Learners can transfer their thoughts into actions that result in learning or create new experiences, leading them to go through the process again after having the chance to reflect and think. This cycle proposed that any experience may be transformed into a reliable source of knowledge (Kurt, 2022).

Learning from setbacks describes processes and behaviors through which individuals, groups, and organizations gain accurate and valuable insights from a setback and modify future behaviors, processes, or systems accordingly. This theory strengthened students' learning process, where their knowledge results from grasping and transforming an experience. It was a humanistic and constructivist approach to education, emphasizing that learning occurs naturally after an experience. It supported comprehending nursing students' real-life experiences with academic setbacks as a concrete experience from which they can observe, conceptualize, and ultimately learn, which can be beneficial in assisting people in discovering their strengths when learning from a bad experience. *Experience* was a process by which something must be changed or transformed. This notion explains how students learn and cope with experiencing an academic setback.

### The Objective of the Study

The study aimed to uncover the lived experiences of nursing students with academic setbacks. This was guided by the central question: "What were your experiences as a nursing student with an academic setback?"

## 2. Method

This chapter presented the methods and procedures employed in this research. The discussions covered the research design and methodology, study participants, the data-gathering tool and procedures, the process used to establish the trustworthiness of data, data management, and ethical considerations.

### Research Design

The study used the qualitative research design. Gonzalez and Forister (2020) elaborated that the qualitative approach was used to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions. It focused on understanding a research query as a humanistic or idealistic approach (Pathak et al., 2020).

Phenomenology research was the phenomenon of a described lived experience. Its method was to analyze data as this was a qualitative analysis of narrative data. Phenomenology focused on the meaning behind experiences, behavior, and narrative (Walters, 2019). Husserlian phenomenology was utilized to understand human phenomena as experienced by the nursing student and includes direct exploration, analysis, and description of the phenomena, aiming at maximum intuitive presentation (Sadang, 2021). The researchers used this method to obtain

insights into what it feels like to be a nursing student with academic setbacks and to understand the world as others experience it.

### **Participants of the Study**

The study was conducted at Union Christian College, and the eight participants were chosen through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was a technique that refers to a group of non-probability sampling wherein units were selected because they have the characteristics you need in your sample. In other words, purposive sampling selected units “on purpose” (Nikolopoulou, 2022). The inclusion criteria were the following: nursing students of Union Christian College, at any age, both genders, experiencing academic setbacks in the major nursing subjects but continuing to pursue their goals, students with setbacks from the school year 2021-2022, and those who were willing to be interviewed for their experiences and be part of the study. The exclusion criteria were those who do not meet the inclusion criteria and were unwilling to be interviewed. The data gathering from the subjects stopped when the saturation point was met, which means there was no more information to be added to the data. Interviews were conducted based on the availability of both the researcher and the participant.

### **Data Gathering Tools and Procedure**

The researchers served as a primary instrument in gathering data for this study. The researcher secured a letter of approval noted by their research adviser to the Dean of the School of Health Sciences at Union Christian College.

Before the interview, the researcher wrote a consent letter to the Registrar’s office to survey to obtain the list of second takers in a significant subject in nursing and those with an incomplete grade in major nursing subjects for the school year 2021-2022.

The research was examined by the Ethics Review Board chaired by the Dean of the School of Health Sciences and composed of experts in the field. Their approval, recommendations, and suggestions were made before the data-gathering procedure, and letters were forwarded to the participants for their consent to conduct the study.

In an in-depth unstructured fashion, an interview was conducted face-to-face to explore the participants’ experiences. Also, field notes observation was used in this study to elicit additional information from the participants. The interview lasts 30 to 45 minutes and was optional. The unstructured interview served as a springboard for the discussion, with open-ended responses to the questions. The researcher first explained the study’s purpose to the participants. They had the right to refuse at any time, and there was no undue pressure to participate in the study. Individual interviews were scheduled with nursing students who chose to participate in the study. This study only included those who signed an informed consent form. The WHO informed consent pattern was used, with participants discussing the following topics: type of research intervention, participant selection, procedures, duration, risks, benefits, confidentiality, and certificate of consent.

There were precautionary measures that were observed in the conduct of interviews for the safety of both the participant and the researcher, which include no physical contact such as handshaking, proper wearing of a mask and face shield, creating physical space of at least 6 feet away from one another, encourage hand washing before the meeting and bring alcohol-based hand rubs such as alcohol and hand sanitizer, and disinfect frequently touched surfaces after use.

From February to March, the researcher established a trusting relationship with the participants throughout each interview by respecting them, carefully listening, and clarifying any unclear problems. Similarly, the researchers used an audio or video recorder app on their smartphones and laptop during the interview with their permission. To protect the participants’ privacy, the researchers also used pseudonyms. Additionally, gestures and facial expressions were seen and noted. Making notes helped to document the information gathered.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Implementing a qualitative approach to the research required attention to ethical considerations. This study was ethically reviewed, and these methods ensured that its research subjects’ participation was voluntary, informed, and comfortable. The participant may openly express various emotions as they speak about their experiences. Researchers considered conducting research using a phenomenological approach professionally. The researcher observed the norms of justice, autonomy, and beneficence. The study was conducted solely for knowledge generation and supported by any agency. The cost of any expenditure made during the study was the obligation of the researchers.

**Conflict of Interest.** Refers to circumstances in which financial or other personal considerations may hinder or appear to jeopardize a professional judgment in conducting or reporting research. There were situations in which a person might favor, or be considered to favor, their interests or commitments over their duties and responsibilities as a researcher, even in the absence of any potential, real, or perceived conflicts of interest involving money and non-financial benefits. Organizations only received support for the study conducted to build knowledge. The researchers covered all study-related expenses.

**Privacy and Confidentiality.** Researchers knew who the participants were and removed all identifying information from the report to maintain confidentiality. The confidentiality of research subjects’ information and participants’ anonymity was respected. The confidentiality convention was upheld to protect all people’s privacy, promote trust, and act with integrity, justice, and fairness toward the participants and the group; research participants were specifically selected. Throughout the research, the researcher ensured confidentiality in all information collected during the interview. The participants’ identities were protected by using pseudonyms instead of their real identities during the collection of data and transcription

process.

**Informed Consent Process.** This leads to a condition in which all potential participants receive and comprehend all the information necessary to decide whether or not to participate. It contains data about the study's benefits, risks, funding, and institutional approval. The rationale for obtaining informed consent from participants was so that participants were aware of what they were signing up for. Furthermore, participants had the right to request additional information if they hesitated or became anxious during the research. Researchers asked them to sign a consent form once all the participants' concerns were addressed. The form served as a method of interaction between the researcher and the participants.

**Vulnerability.** In terms of psychological experience, nursing students were not seen as vulnerable. The researchers protected their rights and ensured that all activities were carried out with the participant's best interests at the forefront if they chose to participate. The researcher ensured that the participants were protected from harm and danger and that their rights were strongly supported.

**Recruitment.** The researcher ensured that the principles of justice and fairness in recruiting were strictly followed and that applicants received respectful treatment. They will all receive the same treatment without bias or judgment. The inclusion criteria were the following: nursing students of Union Christian College, at any age, both genders, experiencing academic setbacks in the major nursing subjects but continuing to pursue their goals, students with setbacks from the school year 2021-2022, and those who were willing to be interviewed for their experiences and be part of the study. The exclusion criteria were those who must meet the inclusion criteria and were willing to be interviewed. Once the volunteers were identified, the researcher will describe the study's purpose and how they will be involved. The researcher will request that the participants sign the consent form after providing them with the essential information. The participant and the researcher will agree on the date and time of the interview. Interview schedules were based on availability to avoid interfering with participants' regular activities and routines.

**Risk.** Participating in the research carried minimal risk. They may be hesitant to offer some of the needed information. The researchers reduced these risks by ensuring that participants' participation in the study was voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.

**Community Consideration.** The truth was that individuals were part of a research study that could define and study the ideas, feelings, and experiences of nursing students at Union Christian College. Lastly, all data gathered from the interview was retained in a secure filing system, and the audio interview was in a unique code number or pseudonym.

**Handling of Specimens.** This research does not include any specimens.

## Data Management

The data analysis was done simultaneously with data gathering. The dates of every interview were satisfactorily documented to perceive the initial interaction from the succeeding ones.

The researchers gathered the data through observations and interviews; thus, the researchers utilized Thematic Analysis. According to Caulfield (2022), Thematic analysis was a method of analyzing qualitative data. It was usually applied to texts, such as an interview or transcripts. The researchers closely examined the data to identify common themes – ideas, topics, and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly. Thematic analysis was an appropriate method for understanding thoughts, experiences, or behaviors across a data set (Kiger et al., 2020).

## Transcript and Digest Level of Analysis

In the analysis of data, the researchers utilized Thematic Analysis. Thematic analysis was used in analyzing qualitative data that needs searching across a data set to report repeated patterns and identify and analyze these (Kiger et al., 2020).

Finding themes in qualitative data can be intimidating and challenging, but how do you condense several qualitative observations? Thematic analysis, which anyone can do, renders essential aspects of qualitative data visible and makes uncovering themes more accessible (Rosala, 2022).

There were six (6) phases done in the thematic analysis. First, the researchers read over all participant testimonies numerous times until the researchers become familiar with the data. Second, the researchers generated the initial code, breaking down all the transcribed data and organizing it systematically. Coding helps in reducing the extensive data into smaller chunks of meaning. Third, the researchers examined all the organized fit two and fit all the significant themes significant in the study. Fourth, step three's organized themes were modified during this phase. The researcher examined the coded data placed within each theme to ensure proper fit, and the researchers will decide if the data was sufficient or belongs to the generated theme. Fifth, in this phase, the researchers created a narrative description of each theme they created and why it was essential in the study. Lastly, the researchers presented the final analysis of the theme generated throughout the steps and described the findings.

## Establishing Trustworthiness of Data

In determining the trustworthiness of data, the researchers considered credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Guba and Lincoln (1989) established the study's credibility when co-researchers or readers were exposed to the event and could recognize it. Confirmability was established when credibility, transferability, and dependability were all met. It recommends that researchers provide markers such as justifications for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the study to help people understand how and why decisions were made

(Elo, 2020).

Credibility sees whether the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants' original data. Credibility was the confidence that can be seen in the truth of the research findings. (Moser et al., 2018). The researchers performed a complete study inquiry that provides credible results based on participant responses. The researchers chose reliable sources that supply information that you can trust. The audit trail was also essential since it guides from the study's start to the findings' creation. The study's investigators were the external auditor, who analyzes the data, analysis, and interpretations if it correctly represents the data.

Transferability concerns the aspect of applicability. The researcher provided a 'thick description' of the participant's experiences and the research process to enable the reader to assess whether the findings were transferable to their setting; this was the so-called transferability judgment. This implies that the reader, not the researcher, makes the transferability judgment because the researcher does not know their specific settings (Stahl, 2020). The researchers studied nursing students at Union Christian College with academic setbacks. Anyone considering a transfer will be able to assess its likelihood of success thanks to the researchers' thorough explanation of the research methodologies, participant histories, and the research environment.

According to Korstjens (2018), dependability includes the aspect of consistency. The researcher will check whether the analysis process aligns with the accepted standards for a particular design. The researcher captured the changing conditions in the setting and the study design due to this reality and kept documentation of the interview. The dependability of the qualitative data was demonstrated through assurances that the findings will be established despite any changes within the research setting or participants during data collection.

Confirmability concerns the aspect of neutrality. The researcher will secure the inter-subjectivity of the data. The interpretation should not be based on researchers' particular viewpoints and preferences but should be grounded in the data. The focus was on the interpretation process in the analysis process. An audit trail was needed to ensure dependability and confirmability (Korstjens, 2018). The researcher will provide research team meetings, complete decision notes made during the research process, reflective thoughts, sampling, research materials adopted, the emergence of the findings, and information about data management.

The researchers hope to bring the knowledge gained from the study into skills with the help of relevant participants. Therefore, researchers considered the study credible and recognizable (Stahl, 2020). Researchers demonstrated their credibility by convincing others that their findings were significant. The researcher contended that these criteria for credibility could be used by a broad spectrum of people and were good possibilities for researchers concerned about the acceptability of their findings. These trustworthiness criteria

were briefly explained before being incorporated into a discussion of the approach the researchers believe will most effectively carry out a reliable topic investigation.

### 3. Results and Discussion

This section provides the interview results conducted for the study. The finding of the study revealed four major themes (1) Forging in the Sand, (2) Tempering through the Fire, (3) Folding along Heat, and (4) The Sword's Might that summed up the phenomena of the process of swordsmithing. The discussion outcomes further explained how the creation of a sword was related to the participant's lived experiences regarding academic failures, particularly the challenges they encountered, the strategies they used for dealing with them, and the lessons they could derive from them.

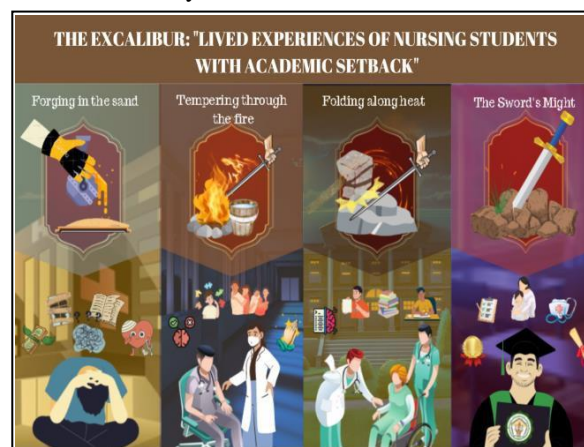


Figure 1. Eidetic Symbol

#### The Excalibur

Morihei Ueshiba stated that *"Iron was full of impurities that weaken it; through forging, it becomes steel and was transformed into a razor-sharp sword. Human beings develop in the same fashion."* (Rufino, 2022)

Nursing students' experiences with academic setbacks were compared to the process of making the Excalibur sword. It was described as the legendary sword of King Arthur from the legends of fifth-century Britain that many believed to have magical properties and contributed significantly to victories in battle at the time (Decary et al., 2021). When he was a young lad, only Arthur was able to remove the sword from a stone where it had been miraculously fixed (Augustyn, 2023).

This phenomenon was paralleled by how students' lives transitioned after the "forging" period or during academic challenges. As they shifted in their "tempering" phase, or how they acquired coping and adaptive strategies during their setbacks and challenges. As they navigate their way to their "folding" stage or on the new learnings they have learned, new information they discovered, and its benefits. Finally, to their "sword's might" season, the students have overcome the challenges they faced and were able to realize things and continue to study despite the setbacks they



experienced. The academic setbacks that the students have were comparable to the process of making a straight sword, as it takes time and hard work to make an authentic and robust blade for a competent and able student nurse who can make a difference.

The sword was straight, double-edged, and pointed, fabricated by repeated firing and hammering (Evangelista, 2023). The fact that Excalibur has two edges suggests that it may portray either the academic challenges or a comparison of the student's success after their setbacks. When the sword remained stuck in the rock for an extended period, the Excalibur sword emerged as the challenge of having academic setbacks. It was because the students were stuck in their situation of having academic challenges for a period where they have to endure all the pains and struggles during their darkest times. When the Excalibur sword was drawn out from the rock, it signifies that students lifted themselves and overcame the effects and consequences of their academic setbacks.

Students were the ones who choose their future by acting upon what they need to do and working out in their present times. They can either accept the challenge and remove the sword from the stone or leave it there as it is. They were the embodiment of King Arthur, and it was found within them.

### Theme 1. Forging in the Sand

Table 1. Theme 1

EMERGENT THEME	CORE CATEGORIES
Forging in the Sand	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Financial Constraints</li> <li>2. Emotional challenges</li> <li>3. Limited online learning</li> <li>4. Poor time management</li> <li>5. Lack of family support</li> <li>6. Health problem</li> <li>7. Uncertainties</li> <li>8. Sense of self-pity</li> <li>9. Pessimism</li> <li>10. Fear</li> </ol>

The theme presented the academic challenges and effects of the setbacks of the nursing students. The forge created a weapon's desired shape, size, and volume. Forging included all the challenges and effects of the academic setbacks on the student's life. In this theme, the extraction of metals used was harrowing compared to the academic challenges that students had, such as financial constraints, emotional challenges, limited online learning, poor time management, lack of family support, and health problems present. And then after collection, the iron materials were heated up and boiled until it becomes liquid and then poured into a mold (Ling, 2019).

The effects of academic setbacks shaped how students dealt with and managed the consequences of the challenges. It either kept them motivated or made them view themselves as failures, driving them to lose interest in continuing. This showed that the students' experiences with challenges shaped them depending on their difficulty level and how they responded to them.

Academic challenges were common among nursing students at specific points in college. Along with these

difficulties, they often struggled to manage their schedules of education and work (part-time jobs), household duties, and social interactions. Learning difficulties were the obstacles and disagreements that individuals face during their setbacks. These challenges include financial constraints, emotional challenges, limited online learning, poor time management, a lack of family support, and health problems. The said problems were similar to casting metal into the mold to be forged later.

### Theme 2. Tempering Through the Fire

Table 2. Theme 2

EMERGENT THEME	CORE CATEGORIES
Tempering Through the Fire	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Decision-Making</li> <li>2. Coping Mechanism</li> <li>3. Stress-Relieving Methods</li> <li>4. Law of Attraction</li> <li>5. Anticipating the Future</li> <li>6. Motivations</li> </ol>

Tempering Through the Fire discussed decision-making, coping mechanisms, stress relieving methods, the law of attraction, anticipating the future, and motivations, which were included under this theme. Tempering delivers the basic curing for a sword's strength. In this theme, the adaptive strategies of nursing students were compared to the elemental curing process. These adaptive strategies that give strength to students to continue and be motivated to pursue their course were mirrored in the elemental curing process or tempering, which likewise gives strength to the sword.

The theme talks about students' decision-making when they were in the middle of academic setbacks. Coping mechanisms were any conscious or nonconscious adjustment or adaptation that decreases tension and anxiety in a stressful experience or situation (Bellar, 2023). The things, events, places, or people students use as coping mechanisms to overcome challenges were essential. The stress-relieving methods also become a helpful factor for students to divert their attention to a brighter side during those dark times. The law of attraction helped students envision the good things, thoughts, and ideas about what they want and want to be in the future. Students who were anticipating the future also have a bird's eye view on their future if they continue to fight the good fight of their dreams. Those motivations students have used during their darkest times on their setbacks became stepping stones to rise above all the odds and challenges.

### Theme 3. Folding Along Heat

Table 3. Theme 3

EMERGENT THEME	CORE CATEGORIES
Folding Along Heat	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. New Learnings and Discovery</li> <li>2. Optimism</li> </ol>

Folding infuses a sword with properties that exceed the typical properties of its design (Ling, 2019). Folding covers all the new learnings & discoveries and optimism that

students have acquired before, during, and after their academic setbacks and compared to the adaptive and coping strategies that helped students overcome challenges, learning, and positive benefits made students better and wiser. The learnings and benefits acquired by the students were comparable to the infused properties of strength to the sword being folded to exceed its specific properties. Learnings and experiences taught the students different life lessons necessary for their growth and development and to strengthen their morality and personality.

The nursing students reported seeking inspiration and additional resources, persistently trying different ideas, and seeking advice to overcome difficulties. Like how the metal was being folded along the heat. Folding was the start of building the metal into a sword by heating it on fire, submerging it into the water, and hammering it. This realization, new learnings, and discovery were the Fire, water, and hammer that strengthen the sword. Folding the metals of negative experience to combine them and heating them with learnings and realizations infuses all the properties and becomes a mighty sword.

#### Theme 4. The Sword's Might

Table 4. Theme 4

EMERGENT THEME	CORE CATEGORIES
The Sword's Might	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Realizations</li> <li>2. Feeling of Fulfillment</li> <li>3. Feeling of Self-Worth</li> </ol>

The final theme was the Excalibur sword itself. The refined sword having that might and sharpness was compared to the participant's realization, fulfillment, and sense of self-worth after their academic setbacks. The participants were the sword's might because, after all those challenges and the procedures that the sword has been through, it made them both the better and more robust version of themselves.

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory supports failure as a concrete experience from which students can observe, conceptualize, and ultimately learn. Experiential learning was focused on learning through experience and evaluating previous experiences (Law & Finnigan, 2021). The students learned from their setbacks and the challenges that they have encountered. They became the Excalibur sword that was mighty enough for them to realize that they needed to continue and finish their studies.

"Success was not final; failure was not fatal: it was the courage to continue that count." — Winston S. Churchill (Rodriguez, 2021). The Excalibur sword was built with the swordsmith's blood, sweat, and tears and was wielded by King Arthur. Like how Excalibur was made, the student's experience was full of blood, sweat, and tears. The sword was the student; they were forged, tempered, and folded to become mighty and strong. Their experience builds them as a whole person, and their setbacks were what they hold onto to continue. They became the worthy sword that drove them to continue after all the process they had been through.

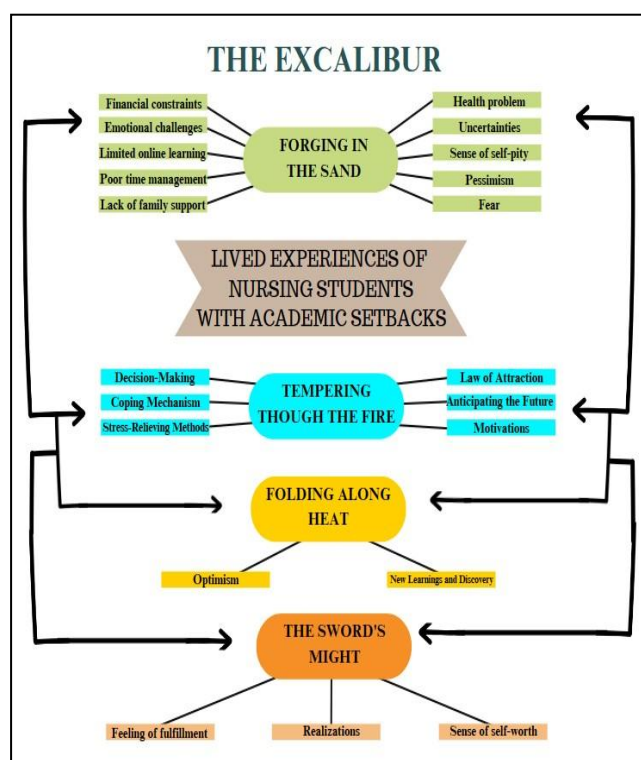


Figure 2. Summary of Themes

## 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study revealed four themes—forging in the Sand, tempering through the Fire, and folding along heat—that sum up into a phenomenon called "A Sword's Might." This study concludes how the participants' lived experiences transitioned when they experienced an academic setback. They were the metal, the student nurses, that kept on being smithing and continuing to overcome life problems. They have been forged, tempered, and folded, and even if they encountered a conquest, they still coped with it with a positive mindset and great passion. Thus, it makes them the mighty sword, Excalibur, which was strong enough to combat the challenging battles of life.

The study recommended that the institution provide better support for students who fail without inadvertently undermining their coping strategies. It was also relevant to consider the university's responsibility in more actively supporting students who might be floundering, not knowing what to do in the face of failure, and potentially repeating failure. Furthermore, nurse educators should continue to understand why they chose not to seek help or modify their actions and how this approach influenced their success in the long term. Furthermore, provide guidance and a safe learning environment to boost their confidence to try again. A remotivation program for nursing students who experience academic setbacks should be implemented to promote emotional support and develop optimism in learning to prevent another setback. The findings of this study might be used to develop a framework to guide



them as they continue to pursue the course. Hence, further research must be done to explore a broader scope of nursing students' experiences with academic setbacks.

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