

Research Article:

## **Rhetorical Construct of the Self: An Exploration of Writings of Teacher Education Students with Delayed College Enrollment**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Understanding people's thinking and actions through exploring their word choice in written discourse can provide an objective analysis of their behavioural patterns in responding to life adversities. This study utilising quantitative and qualitative approaches is an attempt to investigate the coping mechanisms as response to the challenges of pursuing a bachelor's degree of teacher education students who had postponed their college enrollment after graduating from high school. This investigation revolved around analysing students' written essays for personality type profiling using M. A. K. Halliday's Transitivity Theory and exploiting their aspired professional identity employing Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The analysis of students' written essays dealing with life challenges revealed their dominant actor, carrier, and senser-personality types that reinforced their self-consciousness enabling them to be reflective and strategic in addressing life challenges. Moreover, the conceptual metaphor "Teachers are Heroes", as disclosed by the metaphorical constructs of their aspired professional identity, helped them develop motivation, as they realised the significant role which professional teachers play in the society. This self-identification derived from their projected personality types and the motivation they gained from realising their aspired professional identity served as a coping mechanism by stimulating their confidence in dealing with the challenges associated with continuing their college education. To enhance self-awareness and promote self-reflection among teacher education students, this study advocates the integration of the theories of transitivity and metaphor into teacher education curricula for professional identity development.

**Keywords:** Conceptual metaphor, coping mechanism, personality types, professional identity, transitivity process

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## INTRODUCTION

Students who postpone their college enrollment often encounter challenges in continuing their studies. The gap years between high school graduation and college education tend to drive them into work and family commitments which may be incompatible with their roles as students and detrimental to their transition to tertiary education. This experience can cause doubts as to whether they will pursue obtaining a college degree or attempt to find a profitable career in blue-collar employment. Nevertheless, they had decided to pursue their schooling to invest in their personal goal of seeking better career opportunities as professionals. In the Philippines, only 23% of the population were able to finish college due to financial constraints (Philippines News Agency, 2017). These financial limitations place students with delayed college enrollment as a disadvantage as few of them earn college diplomas. On many occasions, their families are not willing to invest in their education, as these young people are already involved in the adult roles of entering the work force, cohabiting with significant partner and starting their own family. These circumstances involving students with delayed college enrollment may result in the loss of their personal identity and inconsistency in their personality as their roles are prone to society's stereotyping; thus, this situation may lessen their motivation to pursue their education.

To address this situation adversely affecting students' learning and career opportunities, appropriate guidance can be extended to those students with delayed college enrollment, i.e., those who enter college one or more years after high school, to help them develop positive career orientation. Self-awareness of their personality traits can be increased to encourage them establish their professional identity. This can empower them to develop coping mechanisms or strategies of adapting to numerous challenges in their lives, especially in continuing education.

Providing guidance to students with delayed college enrollment to help them develop a positive career orientation and self-awareness of their personality traits is necessary to help them cope with the challenges of continuing their education. Several studies have emphasised the importance of having a clear understanding of personality traits and professional identity in adapting to various life challenges. Dishon et al. (2017) noted that individuals with increased self-awareness and self-reflection tend to have a stronger sense of social identity and make choices that were aligned with their values and beliefs. Likewise, Yu et al. (2021) and Bergner et al. (2016) discovered that individuals who highly manifest openness, extraversion and agreeableness were likely to have a stronger sense of professional identity, leadership effectiveness and job involvement. Hence, understanding the personality traits of students with delayed college enrollment and how they relate to their career choices and professional identity development can be a great help to higher education institutions (HEIs) in designing and providing career development programmes to help these students develop a strong sense of professional identity in accord with their strengths and career aspirations.

While several studies have highlighted the importance of understanding personality traits and their relation to career development, minimal explorations have been conducted on how

language can be used as an objective tool to assess these traits. Language as a fundamental aspect of human communication can reflect one's thoughts, feelings and emotions. According to Pinker (2007, p. 5), "the words we use to describe the world and ourselves reveal not only what we think but who we are." This statement implies that analysing the language used by students with delayed college enrollment can provide valuable insights into their personality traits and career aspirations. Considering language as an objective means of assessing personality traits presents a research prospect to scrutinise its effectiveness in evaluating the career aspirations and personality traits of students who have postponed college enrollment. The findings of such research can help HEIs to design better career development programmes that are aligned with the strengths and career aspirations of their students.

Language as a powerful tool for communication does not only allow individuals to represent their ideas to transmit knowledge but also enables them to express their identity. People's identity can be manifested in their word choices whenever they are engaged in various discourses and in their style – a linguistic imprint that can showcase their personality. Undeniably, this characteristic of language highly and potentially exposes students' personality and identity to challenges or events which can be important considerations in providing appropriate scaffolds for them to attain academic success.

Experts in the field of human psychology assert that people's personality is shaped by their experience. This experience often involves people's actions in responding to an event and their reflections towards the actions they have made. According to Simpson (2002, p. 22), language has the capacity to encode these instances "to represent patterns of experience in spoken and written texts." This fulfils the ideational metafunctions of language which consist of two subfunctions – experiential and logical functions. The experiential function relates to characterisation which is widely used in stylistics to understand character traits in narratives through "semantic processes and participant roles embodied in narrative discourse."

Functional linguist M. A. K. Halliday (1971) developed a systematic procedure for analysing characters by examining patterns in language that depict the "mind-styles" of the Neanderthal people in Golding's novel *The Inheritors*; thus, conceiving the theory of Transitivity which is concerned with the process and the participant involved in a narrative clause. Bloor and Bloor (2004) made distinctions between process and participant. Process is viewed as the centre of the verbal group in a clause that represents the "goings-on" while participant is considered as the entity involved in the process. To establish an objective analysis of personality traits of characters in narratives, stylisticians examine the process indicated in a clause and further classify it whether it serves as material, behavioural, mental, verbal, relational or existential process. This classification can be equated with the terms that describe the participant in the clause as actor, senser, carrier, sayer or behavior that can reveal numerous implications on personality traits.

Due to the rigorousness of this procedure, numerous stylistics studies have applied the Transitivity model in analysing personality of characters involved in literary texts. Nguyen

(2012, p. 30) investigated the role of transitivity in the construction of personality of the main character in Hoa Pham's "Heroic Mother." The results of this study revealed that the main character suffered from "loneliness, boredom, and inadequate consideration from her family." Zahoor and Janjua's (2016) analysis of transitivity patterns of a popular tributive song in Pakistan, "I am Malala," revealed that the speaker's spiritual and psychological forbearance enabled her to overcome her encountered oppression. The song's persona also encouraged other girls at her age to be clever and smart to compensate for their fragility. The application of the Transitivity model was found to yield a comprehensive understanding of construction of characters.

In this attempt, the researcher explored the transitivity process of the lived experiences of first-year teacher education students through analysing their written discourses. These were students with delayed college enrollment during the Academic Year 2020–2021 at Batangas State University JPLPC-Malvar, Philippines. Although commonly associated with exploiting character construction in literary texts, the transitivity model seems to have possible applications in analysing non-literary texts, especially in offering insights into authorship (Canning, 2013; Zheng, 2021). This can be used to create students' psychological profile through analysing their compositions. The personality traits of teacher education students with delayed college enrollment and who are at risk of not continuing their education can be better understood by adapting this transitivity model. The analysis of their personality traits may initiate educators to provide ample support for the educational needs of these students as Sweet and Moen (2007) describe this event in students' lives as an attempt to pursue personal or occupational goals. This attempt at redirecting or transforming their lives can help them establish their identity.

In helping teacher education students with delayed college enrollment to establish goal career orientation that can provide them motivation for learning, teachers may guide these students to retrospect on their current undertakings and goals to establish identity. An evolving practice of determining one's identity is through the use of metaphor. As a symbolic element of thoughts, metaphor provides rich information on how people interpret their lives. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p. 4) contend that metaphor serves as structure of people's perception, cognition and action which become part of their "ordinary conceptual system." This conceptual system allows people to associate their experiences (*target domain*) into a different kind of object or encounter (*source domain*); thus, enabling them to draw metaphorical expressions out of the experiences they are trying to understand or describe. These expressions formed from coherent mapping of an experience into other objects or encounters and are embedded in people's oral and written utterances constitute the metaphorical construct of their experiences. Kram et al. (2012, p. 335) utilised metaphor to explore complexities of professional identity. The analysis revealed that scholarship and practice are represented by "institutional logics that embody the values and expectations of academic and practice-based institutions."

The combination of analytic models provided by theories of transitivity and conceptual metaphor can provide objective exploration of the projected personality traits and aspired professional identity of teacher education students with delayed college enrollment.

This exploration can help them to be aware of their personality traits and their aspired professional identity, which can aid them in concretising, internalising and reflecting with their career goals. With an understanding of the nature of students who postponed their college enrollment, educators can provide appropriate moral and academic support, which would help students to academically perform and realise their career aspirations.

Students with delayed college enrollment may be at risk of not pursuing their studies due to the previous constraints that they had encountered about continuing their education. Bozick and DeLuca (2005) characterised these constraints into low socioeconomic background and poor academic performance, which can lower students' chances of completing a bachelor's degree. Thus, appropriate guidance and support in their academic undertaking are needed by these students with delayed college enrollment. Being aware of students' projected personality traits and aspired professional identity through analysing their writings, the researcher can provide a program of activities focusing on self and career orientations that can help the students afford their professional aspirations.

While several studies have underscored the importance of understanding personality traits and their relation to career development, there is still an absence of thorough investigations into how language can be employed as an objective means to assess these traits. Language serves as a fundamental aspect of human communication and has the potential to reflect individuals' thoughts, emotions and self-concepts. By analysing the language used by students with delayed college enrollment, valuable insights into their personality traits and career aspirations can be obtained. This research gap presents a promising research prospect to explore the effectiveness of language analysis in evaluating the career aspirations and personality traits of students who have postponed college enrollment.

The current study addresses the research gap by focusing on rhetorical constructs in assessing individuals' personality traits and career aspirations using language analysis. By analysing the language used by students who have delayed college enrollment, this research offers a unique perspective on the objective evaluation of personality traits and career aspirations. With this exploration, HEIs can gain valuable information on the strengths and career aspirations of their students, enabling them to design more effective and tailored career development programmes. The findings of this can contribute significantly to the field of career development by providing insights into the relationship between personality traits, career aspirations, and language use. It capitalises on the role of language as an essential tool in personality assessment, providing valuable contributions to the understanding of how language can influence individuals' perceptions of themselves and their career goals.

### **Objective of the Study**

This paper is an attempt to explore the projected personality traits and the professional identity of teacher education students with delayed college enrollment at Batangas State University JPLPC-Malvar. This study investigated possible relationship of the participants' personality traits to their professional identity through analysing their written discourses which is anchored on M.A.K. Halliday's Transitivity theory and Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor theory.

Specifically, this paper sought answers to the following questions:

1. What personality traits are projected by the transitivity processes identified in the participants' writings?
2. What metaphorical construct is expressed in the participants' description of their aspired professional identity?
3. How do their projected personality traits and their aspired professional identity help them develop a coping mechanism to address challenges in their lives?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study utilised the sequential explanatory mixed-methods design as it considered both quantitative and qualitative data in exploring the projected personality traits and the professional identity of teacher education students with delayed college enrollment. Creswell and Creswell (2018) characterise this design as research that involves collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data in sequence to explain or elaborate on the other. Within the context of this study, text data from essays and transcripts from interviews were analysed to reveal the personality traits and professional identity of the participants. Meanwhile, the quantitative technique of frequency count was used to determine the number of occurrences of each process type depicted by the verbs in each clause of the analysed essays to reveal the dominant personality traits of students with delayed college enrollment.

### **Participants**

The study employed the purposive sampling method in determining the participants. Purposive sampling involves the selection of participants based on specific characteristics that are relevant to the research objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Since this study explored the projected personality traits and professional identity of teacher education students who delayed their college enrollment, seven teacher education students who had postponed their college enrollment after graduating from high school were selected to participate in the study. This homogenous sample of participants was purposefully chosen as it represents the entire population of teacher education students who delayed their college enrollment after graduating from high school based on the record of the University Registrar's Office (Creswell, 2012). The participants were asked to compose a short essay guided by writing prompts on managing challenges and describe their envisioned professional selves. These teacher education students were considered to provide reliable data as they had delayed their college enrollment for two or more consecutive semesters, had assumed adult roles as workers, and were adjusting to the demands of academic rigor in tertiary education as first-year teacher education students.

## **Instruments**

This study examined a corpus of seven essays produced by teacher education students who delayed their college enrollment. In writing their essays, the participants were given writing prompts that allowed them to narrate their experiences of overcoming challenges or difficulties in their lives. The writing prompts included questions such as the duration of their break from school, the reasons behind it, how they spent their time while not studying, and how they responded to the challenges and adversities they commonly encountered. These questions were designed to elicit their personality traits, as people's personality is often shaped by how they respond to challenges and adversities (Bleidorn et al., 2020; Rakhshani & Furr, 2021). Also included in their essays are their reflections about their aspired professional identity. To elicit their professional identity, the participants responded in writing to questions such as how they envision themselves as professionals in the future, what roles they could play in contributing to the success of their future organisation or business, and which object, animal or idea they would associate themselves with as professionals and why. By understanding their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as their career aspirations, the participants were able to be conscious of their coping mechanisms to address the challenges they faced while studying.

Aside from writing prompts, interview questions were also prepared to explore the relationship between self-knowledge, knowledge of the desired profession, and success in academic and professional pursuits. These questions were formulated as follows: "How does knowing your strengths and weaknesses, as well as your desired profession, contribute to your success as a student?" "How does self-awareness and knowledge of your chosen profession contribute to your success in your studies?" and "In what ways can awareness of your strengths, weaknesses, and career goals help you make informed decisions as a student and achieve success in your future profession?" These questions are vital in examining the role of self-awareness in academic and professional success. The analysis of the participants' responses provided valuable insights into how their personality traits and professional identity served as their coping mechanism in addressing challenges.

Prior to requesting that the participants compose their essays and be involved in an individual interview, a validation process was conducted for the writing prompts and for the interview questions used to guide them in narrating their experiences. This validation process was carried out by a group of experts that included a doctorate degree holder in English studies, a doctorate degree holder in educational management, a Gender and Development focal person, and a registered psychometrician to ensure that the text data to be gathered from the participants' responses on the writing prompts that guided them in writing their essays and on the interview questions were aligned with the objectives of the study.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

In this study, two types of textual data were gathered: narrative data and data generated through interviews. The narrative data were collected from compositions written by teacher education students who had delayed their college enrollment. These students were asked to

write a short essay guided by writing prompts on managing challenges and describing their envisioned professional selves. The essays were analysed, and the number of occurrences of each process type depicted by the verbs in the clauses was counted to determine the dominant personality traits of students with delayed college enrollment.

To further validate the personality traits and professional identity of the participants revealed in their compositions, interviews were facilitated. The interviews were conducted through an online meeting platform after the essays had been analysed. During the interviews, the participants were allocated 30 minutes each to elaborate on their experiences upon delaying their college enrollment, as well as their goals and aspirations for their future careers. The audio recording of the interview was transcribed for further analysis, which included identifying recurring themes and patterns in the participants' responses.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

### *Discourse analysis*

To determine the participants' personality traits, the researcher made use of discourse analysis employing M.A.K. Halliday's Transitivity Theory wherein the compositions were broken down into clauses. In each clause, the subject referring to the participant was identified. The verb which relates to the identified subject was analysed to reveal its transitivity process, exposing whether the action is material, behavioural, mental, verbal, relational, or existential – revealing their corresponding personality traits such as actor, behavior, senser, sayer, or carrier. The dominant transitivity process was determined through frequency count. Meanwhile, the aspired professional identity of the participants was revealed by their metaphorical constructions associated with their aspired profession. The participants' metaphorical constructs were analysed by applying Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor theory. The source and the target domains of the metaphorical constructs were examined to reveal the participants' professional identity.

Moreover, the researcher devised an operational framework which is shown in Figure 1 to support the underlying theories and principles of transformational coping mechanism of the self which can be the result of increased self-awareness of personality traits and aspired professional identity. By conducting interviews with the participants, the researcher explored possible associations on how their projected personality traits and aspired professional identity served as a coping mechanism to address life challenges.

### *Frequency count*

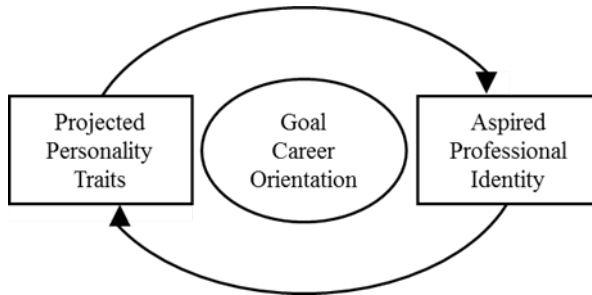
The present study involved an analysis of compositions produced by students with delayed college enrollment in order to reveal their dominant personality traits. To this end, the compositions were first broken down into clauses, and all of the verbs pertaining to the identified subject of each clause were subsequently categorised based on their transitivity process. Specifically, the verbs were classified as either material, behavioural, mental, verbal, relational or existential, which allowed for a comprehensive examination of the students'



personality traits. Frequency counts of these verbs were then conducted to ascertain the dominant transitivity process and, consequently, the dominant personality traits of the participants. Overall, a total of 133 clauses containing 134 verbs were identified and classified into their respective process types.

### **Operational Framework**

To clarify the groundwork of the study, the operational framework is provided in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Transformational coping mechanism of the self

Figure 1 illustrates the transformational coping mechanism of the self. The projected personality traits deal with an individual's action or reaction towards an event which can be encoded in a clause using appropriate transitivity process to capture the felt experience. This felt experience can shape one's aspired professional identity which can be represented by symbols and properly communicated through metaphor. Likewise, this identity may also influence a person's projected personality. Both personality traits captured in a clause and identity represented by metaphor constitute the rhetorical construct of self which can help develop one's goal career orientation that can serve as a transformational coping mechanism to address constraints in their career development stage.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Projected Personality Traits in Participants' Writings**

In determining the projected personality traits of teacher education students with delayed college enrollment, they were asked to write an essay on overcoming life challenges. Utilising Halliday's Transitivity Theory, their written essays were broken down into clauses to categorise the process type illustrated by each clause as indicated by the verb carrying the process type. A total of 133 clauses with 134 verbs were identified and classified into their respective process types to reveal the dominant personality traits of students with delayed college enrollment. Table 1 exemplifies the participants' projected personality traits based on the dominant frequency of process types found in their writings on life challenges.

**Table 1.** Process types projecting personality traits in students’ writings

Projected personality traits	Frequency of process types		Frequency of process		
Actor	material [49]	action [35]	change [2], find [2], finish [2], give [2], pass [2], save [2], support [2], trust [2], accumulate [1],	afford [1], buy [1], build [1], do [1], experience [1], get [1], handle [1], hire [1], make [1],	overcome [1], send [1], speak [1], spend [1], strengthen [1], test [1], thank [1], take [1], update [1]
		event [14]	study [2], tried [2], work [2], come [2],	continue [1], cope [1], go [1],	happen [1], keep [1], pray [1]
Behaver	behavioural [2]		look [1],	think [1]	
Senser	mental [34]	perception [1]	see [1]		
		cognition [13]	know [4], find out [3],	think [3], realize [1],	understand [1], wonder [1]
		desideration [17]	decide [5], want [5],	need [4], accept [1],	choose [1], resist [1]
		emotion [3]	envy [1],	feel [1],	lost [1],
Sayer	verbal [3]		tell [3]		
Carrier	relational [41]	attribution [20]	be [12], get [4],	become [2], seem [1],	stay [1]
		identification [21]	be [13],	have [8]	
	existential [5]		there be [5]		

Based on the frequency of the process types carried by the verbs within the identified clauses in their writings, students with delayed college enrollment were likely to be actors, carriers, and sensors rather than being sayers and behavers. These students as actors were transmitters of actions requiring direct or indirect objects to fulfill actions or tasks. This trait of students as actors is manifested by the material process represented by transitive verbs that require nominals as goals to elicit an action. The action transmitter and goal directed traits of students as actors are illustrated in the following excerpts from their writings:

Verbs in action mode of material process:

... and at that time, I *spent* the money I had saved for my studies. [P1]

... why [I] *find* work and have small sideline at that time... [P3]

... so that I *can save* money and get back to school... [P1]

I *overcome* those problems that I encountered by looking for a job. [P6]

... and I *thanked* God because until now I still continue [going] to college as student[-]s. [P7]

[P] followed by a number represents the participant number assigned to each individual in the study.

As seen in the provided excerpts, the verbs *spent*, *find*, *overcome*, and *thanked* along with the verb phrase *can save* function as transitive verbs which require direct objects such as *money*, *work*, *problems* and *God* in order for the subjects of these clauses containing transitive verbs to carry out their respective actions; thus, making these subjects as action transmitters in which each action is directed towards a goal.

These excerpts from students' writings suggest that these students as goal-directed actors were strategic and reflective in responding in life challenges by finding work to save and spend financial resource to overcome challenges in continuing tertiary education and being thankful to the supreme being. Corbetta and Fagard (2017) considered this goal directed action as central to any individual daily undertaking. This action requires anticipation and planning in responding to any adversity. This pattern of responding to life challenges allows the teacher education students to predict the consequences of the actions that they are about to make as they plan measures to minimise possible detrimental effects of these actions to their lives.

Students with delayed college enrollment were also carriers as depicted by the frequency of relational process type of verbs in clauses found in their writings. Nearly the same frequency of attributive and identifying verbs were recorded. This sameness in frequency implies that students often relate to their human attributes and are conscious of self-identification as shown in the given excerpts from their writings.

Verbs in attribution mode of relational process:

... I *get* discouraged every time I think I didn't pass. [P1]

... even though I *am* already struggling and confused with myself. [P1]

At that time I *got* sick and needed to have surgery... [P1]

Verbs in identification mode of relational process:

... and [I] *become* a successful future teacher even if I did not finish school early. [P1]

... Hard work and perseverance are one of my work partners. [one of my work partners *are* hard work and perseverance.] [P1]

... and one of these [goals] *is* to help my family with the expenses and necessities of daily life. [P1]

The excerpts showing the verbs in the attribution mode of relational process such as *get*, *am* and *got* construe the psychological and physiological experiences of their respective subjects; thus, referring to the emotional state, e.g., *discouraged* and *struggling* and bodily condition, e.g., *sick* or attribute of each of these subjects. These attributions associated with relational verbs encapsulate the felt experience of students as results of life challenges they had encountered. These challenging encounters may likely bring negative experiences such as discouragement, struggle, confusion, sickness, and the like. Consequently, acknowledgement of these adversities in life enabled them to identify their personal qualities and goals that are helpful for them to foresee their career as educators. This foreseeing of career as educators is demonstrated by the words and phrases such as *hard working* and *perseverance* as work partners, and *to help the family* as a life goal implying their personal qualities and goals which are introduced by the verbs in the identifying mode of relational process, e.g., *become*, *are* and *is*. The combination of identifying qualities and goals is deemed significant for their transformation as successful teachers. Likewise, Locke and Latham (2006), and Höpfner and Keith (2021) affirm that success lies in proper goal setting. Students envisioning themselves as successful teachers can develop self-efficacy upon acknowledging their positive qualities and purposes in setting their career goals. This goal setting capitalising on self-consciousness can provide them proper direction that may ensure their success.

Teacher education students with delayed college enrollment as sensors were decisive individuals driven by their thoughts. This trait is manifested by the frequency of verbs in the mental process type that are dominantly in the desideration and cognition subtypes. This blend of desideration and cognition subtypes exposed in their writings clearly suggests that students comprehend their challenges and situations before making decisions about them. This thinking-decision pattern in sensing and responding to life adversities is exploited in the following excerpts from their writings:

Verbs in the cognition subtype of mental process:

... I *understand* that [my parents could not send me to private school] because I did not want to see my parents struggling. [P1]

And I *realised* that my salary could not be not enough to save for my future. [P5]

I *wondered* if I should put my studies to sleep or stop... [P7]

Verbs in the desideration subtype of mental process:

I *decided* to work after I graduated in high school to support our daily needs and also to help my family necessity. [P5]

I *need* to be strong for my family. [P6]

I just *want* to sacrifice my schooling in/[for] my younger siblings. [P5]

The verbs *understand*, *realised* and *wondered* which are in the cognition subtype of mental process denote the subjects' initiatives of comprehending or understanding their encountered challenges before making decision in taking appropriate action to resolve those adversities. This decision making which occurs after comprehending their problems is depicted in the verbs *decided*, *need* and *want* which are in the desideration subtype of mental process. As illustrated in the excerpts, clauses associated with the cognition subtype of mental process deal with analysing the challenges that had contributed to delay their college enrollment. These challenges delaying their college education include scarcity of financial resource and opportunity that may have influenced them to set aside their schooling. Consequently, their comprehension of challenges in delaying their college education had driven them to make immediate decisions as temporary solutions to their limited resource and opportunity. This improvisation in responding to their life adversities requires them to be strong and to momentarily sacrifice their schooling. This thinking-decision pattern of behaving is often related to Carl Jung's Sensing Plus Thinking Model of how individuals make judgement (Myers & Myers, 1995). Teacher education students tend to be practical in making decisions by thoroughly sensing and rationalising their experiences, especially with life challenges before coming up with reasoned decisions. This judgement making by students may elicit success as they plan appropriate actions in addressing their challenges after fully comprehending the nature of these problems; thus, they become objective in making decisions.

In general, teacher education students with delayed college enrollment project traits of being actors, carriers and sensors, as revealed by the transitivity processes reflected among the verbs of the clauses identified in their writings. These projected traits characterise them as goal-driven doers who often relate to their experiences and aspired career. Also, they are decisive thinkers, enabling them to respond to the challenges of delaying their college enrollment. Examining the Transitivity process in Functional Grammar allows the profiling of the personality traits of the students with delayed college enrollment by objectively drawing the process types carried by the verbs among the clauses of their written essays considering their word choice in narrating their felt experience from life challenges (Simpson, 2002; Rubavathanan, 2021).

This result suggests that students who delayed their college enrollment may have certain personality traits that make them well-suited for the teaching profession. The writing patterns observed in their work indicate that they are goal-oriented individuals who relate well to their experiences and career aspirations. Goal-oriented traits are crucial for teachers as they set clear objectives and empathize with students. Malmberg (2006) and Kunst et al.

(2018) highlight the importance of this trait in shaping long-term teacher motivation and fostering commitment in the teaching profession. Teachers with goal orientation are more likely to establish effective learning objectives and maintain intrinsic motivation, leading to better educational outcomes. The study also shows that these students are decisive thinkers, which enables them to respond quickly to challenges. This is a valuable trait for teachers as they make swift decisions and adapt to changing situations in the classrooms. This ability to make informed and prompt decisions is instrumental in creating a conducive learning environment and effectively addressing disruptions or disturbances in the classroom setting (Aho et al., 2010). Teacher education programmes are then encouraged to consider recruiting and supporting students who have delayed their college enrollment, as they possess valuable personality traits that can make them effective educators. Likewise, teacher education institutions may incorporate training and support programmes that focus on developing these specific personality traits in their students.

### Participants’ Metaphorical Construction of Aspired Professional Identity

To identify the metaphorical construction of their aspired professional identity, the participants were asked to write their responses to questions about how they envision themselves as professionals. Their written responses to the questions about their aspired professions were analysed using Lakoff and Johnson’s Conceptual Metaphor Theory to determine their symbolical representation of their aspired professional identity. Table 2 shows the participants’ metaphorical construction of their aspired professional identity.

Participants regarded their aspired profession as an opportunity to become heroes. This hero identity of their chosen profession is illustrated by the conceptual metaphor that professional *teachers are heroes*. The target domain (*teachers*) of this metaphor is conceptually associated with its source domain (*heroes*) which is built in the construct that teaching is a heroic profession as this profession requires educators to serve as mentors and warriors.

**Table 2.** Metaphorical construction of aspired professional identity

Theme	Subthemes	Constructs
Professional teachers <sup>[target domain]</sup> are heroes <sup>[source domain]</sup> .	Professional teachers are mentors.	Professional teachers share knowledge and experiences. [P2]
		Professional teachers serve as role models. [P1]
		Professional teachers inspire people. [P2]
		Professional teachers help individuals in attaining their dreams. [P1], [P3], [P4]
	Professional teachers are warriors.	Professional teachers grow through overcoming trials. [P1]
		Professional teachers have independence, self-reliance, and perseverance. [P2]
		Professional teachers are resourceful and creative. [P5]
		Professional teachers fight to attain their dreams. [P7]

Note: [P] followed by a number represents the participant number assigned to each individual in the study.

Teachers as mentors help their students in attaining the latter's dreams by sharing knowledge and experiences, and inspiring learners by acting as role models to them. Participants recount this teacher-mentor metaphorical construction as follow:

I see myself as a good role model for many children. I see myself putting my skills to good use and helping advance the school's goals and mission. [P1]

And as an educator, all I can share or contribute is my knowledge and experiences in life that maybe inspire them. [P2]

... and as a future educator, learnings, experiences, and knowledge is my fruit that I can share and give to other people. [P3]

These teacher-mentor qualities ascribed in the cited metaphorical construct reveal students' potential of becoming influential and inspirational teachers. Ramachandran (2006) considered teacher-mentors beneficial for producing quality graduates as they are capable of inspiring students by serving as role models who are willing to share knowledge and experiences to help students attain success. Likewise, these teacher education students with delayed college enrollment may exhibit mutual respect, trust, understanding and empathy that are believed distinct qualities of good mentors.

Meanwhile, professional teachers were also deemed warriors by the participants. The teacher-warrior metaphorical representation of their aspired identity is depicted in the constructs that teachers grow by overcoming trials in fighting for their dreams. Moreover, teachers as warriors also inhibit traits such as independence, self-reliance, perseverance, resourcefulness and creativity that are important in battling illiteracy within the educational arena. Participants narrate these warrior-like characteristics of their aspired profession as follows.

There are also bitter things happening in our lives, and many more trials come our way. [P1]

I can compare myself to a turtle not because of its slowness but because of its strong independence, self-reliance, and perseverance in life. [P2]

I can relate myself to the animal like a tiger, because like this I am ready to fight and resist the test for my future and my dream. [P7]

Mirra et al. (2018) and Sharad (2020) noted that this warrior representation of teachers is attributed to their capability to bring societal change through making personal sacrifices in delivering quality instructions. Likewise, Alarcón Hernández et al. (2020) recognised the warrior-like characteristics of teachers who remain optimistic despite trials and difficulties ascribed in their profession.

To conclude, participants associate their professional identity of becoming professional teachers to being heroes. This teacher-hero conceptual metaphor can be viewed as collective generalisation of the important role that teachers play in the society. Wright (2012) alluded that most societies considered teachers as heroes for their significant contributions of educating the populace despite the demands associated with the teaching profession.

This result provides valuable insights into the teacher-hero conceptual metaphor. Teacher education students often associate their professional identity with becoming heroes which reflects the collective generalisation of the important role that teachers play within society. By acting as heroes with classic values, teachers can positively influence the classroom environment right from the moment students enter. They do so by setting the tone, presenting inclusively, and providing meaningful activities, which effectively lead their students toward successful learning experiences as they create conducive learning environments that promote active learning, inclusivity, and student motivation (Heslinga, 2013). The heroic efforts of teachers can be explicitly inculcated among preservice teachers. This can be initiated by teacher education institutions through designing training programmes that inspire and motivate aspiring teachers to see themselves as heroes in the making. By doing so, teacher education institutions can promote a positive image of the teaching profession, attract more individuals to pursue teaching as a career, and advocate for policies that recognise and reward teachers for their contributions to society.

### **Projected Personality Traits and Aspired Professional Identity as Coping Mechanism in Addressing Challenges**

In examining how the participants' projected personality traits and aspired professional identity serve as coping mechanisms in addressing life challenges, the researcher analysed possible associations between the process types projecting personality traits and the metaphorical construction of aspired professional identity evident in the participants' writings. Interviews with the participants were also conducted to validate the themes that emerged from the analysis. These emerging themes on students' coping mechanism in addressing challenges are presented in the succeeding paragraphs.

#### ***Self-recognition***

Having an awareness of their own projected personality traits, the participants were able to fully understand themselves by knowing both their strengths and weaknesses. This reflection focusing on their positive and negative traits enabled them to be conscious of their behavioural patterns comprising on how they sense the external world that can be bases of their decisions in making goal directed actions. Participants describe this behavioural pattern as "knowing the self" by "understanding one's interests, values, strengths, and skills before exploring the next steps in life" [P1, P2, P7]. This self-consciousness can guide the students to successfully deal with life challenges by understanding their traits and capabilities as Duval and Silvia (2002) noted that awareness of self can influence success when individuals recognise their capacity for improvement.

#### ***Motivation***

Being conscious of their aspired professional identity, the participants were motivated to pursue and achieve their dreams of becoming professional teachers. This aspiration of themselves as professionals provide them sense of direction to strive hard and attain success. Participants illustrate this drive for success as their attempt to "strive for something that is priceless and important" to their lives and to envision their future success [P3, P6,



P7]. Likewise, Valeriu (2015) emphasised the significant role of aspiration as motivator in attaining success. Aspiration can influence performance which can contribute to an individual progress.

### ***Strength building***

Self-recognition and motivation that the participants had derived from their projected personality traits and aspired professional identity enable them to be strong in addressing the challenging encounters in their lives. Equip with strength, these students with delayed college enrollment take the demand of continuing college education with “confidence and faith” that they can “achieve the goal” that they had set in pursuing their career as teachers [P5, P7]. Addressing life adversities with strength can be helpful for these students in achieving their set goals as Sebastin (2014) stressed that challenges and struggles can be best addressed when individuals highlight their strengths.

The findings suggest the need for teacher education training institutions to integrate self-reflection and self-recognition exercises as learning tasks across professional education courses. This integration can help students understand their own projected personality traits and how these traits can influence their actions. This integration of self-reflection and self-awareness practices into teacher education can equip aspiring teachers with the tools to better understand their emotions, reactions and biases, enabling them to respond more effectively to their students’ diverse needs and challenges (Ardelt & Grunwald, 2018; Suphasri & Chinokul, 2021). Understanding this interrelationship between personality traits and their actions can guide them to successfully deal with life challenges and improve their capacity for improvement. As the results highlight the importance of motivation and aspiration in driving success and contributing to an individual’s progress, teacher education institutions are encouraged to incorporate strategies that foster intrinsic motivation, self-reflection and goal-setting to empower students in their academic journey. By nurturing and encouraging students’ academic motivation, teacher training programmes can contribute to the development of motivated, dedicated and successful educators who are passionate about their chosen field and committed to their students’ growth and learning (Sivrikaya, 2019). Teacher education institutions can also equip their students with the necessary tools and support to address challenges and struggles by capitalising on the latter’s strengths. By equipping them with the necessary tools, knowledge and support, teacher education programmes can help students overcome challenges and utilise their strengths effectively. Empowering future teachers with the needed skills and resources during their training can set them up for successful careers, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to their profession and the overall educational landscape (Ulla et al., 2017). This can help students achieve their set goals and succeed in their careers as future teachers. Hence, incorporating self-reflection, motivation and strength-building exercises in teacher education training programmes is imperative to help students develop a strong sense of self-awareness, purpose and resilience which are essential for their personal and professional growth.

## CONCLUSIONS

Language serves as an indispensable tool in looking to individuals' psychology. People's thoughts, behavioural patterns, actions and aspirations can be comprehended by carefully examining the choice of words they used to encapsulate their felt experiences. Halliday's Transitivity Theory has provided an objective approach in drawing the personality trait profile of teacher education students with delayed college enrollment. Awareness of their dominant actor, carrier, and senser-personality types reinforced their self-consciousness of the way they respond to life challenges. This consciousness of self or self-identification enable them to rationalise their thoughts and actions making them reflective and strategic in responding to life adversities. Meanwhile, Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory serve as a mean to exploit their aspired professional identity. This professional aspiration is disclosed in the metaphorical construct that professional teachers are heroes. This symbolical teacher-hero representation provided them motivation to pursue and achieve their goal of becoming professional teachers as they see the important role that teachers play within the society. Self-recognition and motivation derived from their projected personality traits and aspired professional identity help them develop strength through acquiring confidence and faith that are essential in overcoming adversities in continuing their college education; thus, serving as their transformational coping mechanism in addressing challenges.

This study shows that language plays a vital role in understanding individuals' psychology as Halliday's Transitivity Theory provided an objective approach to draw personality trait profiles of teacher education students with delayed college enrollment. This finding encourages teacher education institutions to integrate the Transitivity Theory as a tool in providing students with opportunities for self-awareness and self-reflection within the curriculum, which can be an essential component of professional development in the teaching field. As the study capitalises on the importance of understanding students' professional aspirations and using metaphors to facilitate the development of a professional identity, Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory can be used to guide teacher education programmes in facilitating students' identification with the profession and their motivation to pursue their goals. This approach could contribute to the development of a more dedicated future teaching workforce that understands and values the importance of their role in society. Moreover, the study shows the role of language and personality traits in facilitating the development of teacher education students as well as the importance of metaphors in shaping students' perceptions toward the teaching profession. These notions can be considered in developing strategies and interventions that promote self-awareness, self-reflection and professional development among teacher education students which can help in producing motivated and committed teacher education graduates.

In consonance with the results of the study, teacher education institutions can integrate Transitivity Theory into their curriculum to enhance students' self-awareness and self-reflection. This can be done by incorporating language analysis exercises that encourage students to reflect on their word choice and the underlying psychological factors that influence their communication. Constant integration of reflective writing activities in classrooms can increase the opportunities for learners' self-consciousness and understanding

of their thoughts about their current academic undertaking. The integration of this theory can help students to better understand their dominant personality types and how they influence their behaviour and actions.

As the study highlights the importance of using metaphors to facilitate the development of a professional identity, teacher education programmes can use this approach to guide students in identifying themselves with the teaching profession and motivate them to pursue their goals. This can be done by incorporating metaphorical constructs that reflect the role of teachers in society and emphasising the importance of their work in shaping the future of individuals and society.

The study's findings can also be used to develop strategies and interventions that promote self-awareness, self-reflection and professional development among teacher-education students. These interventions can include workshops, training sessions and reflective exercises that encourage students to explore their personality traits, professional aspirations and potential impact on their teaching practice.

Teacher education institutions can collaborate with schools to develop mentoring programmes that promote the development of professional identity among students. Such programmes can provide students with opportunities to work with experienced teachers and observe their teaching practice. This can help students to better understand the demands of the teaching profession and how they can develop the necessary skills to become effective teachers.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Teacher education institutions can introduce language analysis as a core component of teacher training programmes. By understanding the role of language in reflecting individuals' psychology, future teachers can develop effective communication skills, empathy and an awareness of their students' needs and emotions. This can lead to improved teacher-student relationships and enhanced learning experiences in the classroom.

Given the significance of self-recognition and motivation in overcoming adversities, teacher education programmes can incorporate mindfulness and coping strategies training. By teaching future teachers how to manage stress, build resilience and maintain a positive outlook, institutions can equip them with essential tools to navigate challenges in their teaching careers effectively.

As the study was only conducted among teacher education students in a specific cultural context of the research local, future studies may deal with cross-cultural research to examine the role of language in shaping personality traits and professional identity across different cultures. This can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between language and personality development, which can be useful in developing culturally sensitive interventions and strategies for promoting professional development among teacher education students.

Future studies can build upon the insights from this research by exploring the practical implementation of Halliday's Transitivity Theory and Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory in teacher education institutions. Conducting longitudinal studies that assess the long-term impact of integrating Transitivity Theory into the curriculum can provide a more comprehensive understanding of its effects on students' self-awareness and self-reflection.

Researchers can also investigate the efficacy of using metaphors based on Lakoff and Johnson's theory to foster a stronger sense of professional identity and motivation among teacher education students. Comparative studies examining the outcomes of teacher education programmes that integrate these theories versus those that do not can offer valuable insights into the potential benefits of incorporating language analysis and metaphorical constructs in teacher education.

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