

## Chapter I

### THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

#### Introduction

Choosing a senior high school (SHS) track is an important decision that can shape a student's upcoming academic and career journey. Many students encounter stress, doubt, and pressure from family, peers, and society when deciding which track to pursue. These challenges make it hard for students to select a strand that aligns with their interests, abilities, and long-term goals. Among the available options, the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) track is often described as both challenging and rewarding, offering opportunities for advanced education and promising careers.

In the Philippines, STEM students face many academic and personal challenges, including heavy workload, time management difficulties, and the need for strong support systems from peers, teachers, and family (Reyes & Bautista, 2021). Even with these challenges, many students remain dynamic to pursue STEM due to personal hope, such as career opportunities, higher education expectations, and possible financial stability. External influences, including guidance counselors, career orientation programs, and family encouragement, also play a key role in students' decisions (Mercado & Alviar, 2022).

While certain studies have examined factors affecting students' strand choices, most have employed quantitative approaches that measure the degree of influence of certain factors (Malaguial et al., 2023). These studies supply practical statistical insights, but they do not capture the lived experience, motivations, and personal reflections of students who choose STEM. There is a lack of qualitative research exploring the lived experiences of Filipino students in

selecting the STEM track, specially within local contexts such as Lutucan Integrated National High School (LINHS).

Understanding students' lived experiences is deciding for designing guidance programs that address both academic and personal needs. Exploring the motivations behind students' decisions allows educators to support learners in building trust, resilience, confidence, and a sense of purpose in pursuing STEM. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the lived experiences and motivational factors of students in choosing the STEM track at LINHS. By concentrating on students' personal narratives, the research point to provide a deeper understanding of the challenges, inspirations, and decision-making processes complex in selecting this academic pathway

### **Background of the Study**

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### **Theoretical Framework**

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### **Research Paradigm**

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### **Statement of the Problem**

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### **Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

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### **Significance of the Study**

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### **Definition of Terms**

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## **Chapter II**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

## Reference List

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