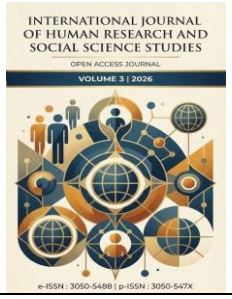
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Redirected But Not Erased: Filipino Students' Accounts of Educational Redirection

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ABSTRACT: Educational transitions can destabilize students' relations, roles, and sense of moving forward. This qualitative interview study explores educational redirection among 12 Filipino transfer students ages 18-23, one of whom interrupted studies following transfer and returned later. Educational redirection refers to rethinking the expected educational pathway after transferring institutions, often with program changes and interruption of studies. The audio recordings of the research interviews were fully transcribed and the entire interview data set comprised the analytic data. A constructivist/interpretivist perspective guided case-based and cross-case analysis. Four themes emerged: living with a redirected educational pathway while defending a valued self; being enrolled but existing on the margins of belonging; keeping difficulty secret to protect relations and dignity; and responding to threat through expensive efforts and limited participation. Cross-cutting through all these stories was the theme of recognition of interests, contributions, voices and pragmatic limitations. In all of these experiences, continuity of an important identity was worked out in concert with unrecognized subjects, fractured communications, employment and caregiving. One can participate but still be uncertain, or remain silent while protecting important relationships. An interpretive model following the research highlights these themes as well as the place of recognition within institutional and familial contexts. Implications for counseling are tied to transition-sensitive intake, accessible academic discourse, pragmatic coordination, and student-centered disclosures. These findings represent situational interpretations of entire interview transcripts at one point in time.

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KEYWORDS:
educational transitions, educational redirection, belonging, help-seeking, student experiences, qualitative interviews

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INTRODUCTION

Transformations in institutions might help retain access to education while challenging existing social relations, obligations, and assumptions about advancement. In the present study, educational redirection will be defined as rethinking of an expected educational trajectory upon institutional transition. A change in the program of education or a disruption and subsequent re-entry into education will be part of such a trajectory. The concepts should still be treated as distinct since institutional transition will mean switching institutions, program change will involve changing areas of study, and re-entry will imply resuming education after a break. A changed timeline for graduation will be one of the outcomes of an educational redirection but not its definition or inclusion criterion.

Several reasons for analyzing transfer other than academic success have been revealed by previous research. For instance, in their Hong Kong study which included 124 transfer students, Ching et al. (2021) found problems with social integration coexisting with considerable academic adaptability. The findings warn against considering academic success as evidence of easy adaptation to the new learning environment. The experience of hardship together with the continuation of educational motivation was described by Gabana and Madrigal (2021) in regard to five transfer students at a state college after attending private schools in the Philippines.

Some recent research puts belonging in institutional relationships in focus. For example, Holland Zahner and Harper (2025) studied validation and non-validation experienced by the underrepresented students specializing in STEM fields either with a transfer experience or without one. At the same time, belonging of 13 community college students with a transfer experience has

been defined by Hernández Holliday et al. (2026) as a negotiated process between personal orientations and institutional messages. The current research is inspired by such research but differs in terms of transfer and institutional contexts.

Help seeking also contributes a counseling perspective. In their systematic review of 15 studies of Filipino mental health help-seeking, Martinez et al. (2020) found barriers in psychosocial, sociocultural, and structural factors. Excluded from this review were concerns related to academics and career, unless a mental health concern was involved. This review contributes context around disclosure and access but does not provide a direct understanding of how transfer students utilize academic advising and guidance services.

A complete representation of the counseling problem is not achieved by focusing on the fact that a student continues enrollment at the college or university. While a student persists in their studies, they are likely to be interpreting their struggle and delay in light of their competence, decisions and responsibilities toward other people. The current study is interested in understanding how these interpretations occur within the possibilities of participation and disclosure of difficulty.

RELATED LITERATURE AND INTERPRETIVE LENSES

Transfer as a contextual and relational transition

The reviewed studies involve different paths. Ching et al. (2021) studied community college transfer in Hong Kong. Gabana and Madrigal (2021) studied financially constrained private-to-state transfers in the Philippines. Higgerson (2026) studied program change through 13 semi-structured interviews using Schlossberg's transition theory. These studies have a common focus on adjustment but involve different forms of institutional transfer, change reasons, and available support. In the present study, transfer will be used as the sampling framework, while the aspects of program change and interrupted education will be considered within individual transfer experience.

In the current study, academic adjustment refers to the narratives about coping with courses, assessments, credit transfer, and learning processes; social integration relates to involvement in peer groups and communication networks; belonging relates to acceptance and recognition. These are analytical categories rather than measured variables. Ching et al. (2021) give grounds for the distinction between academic adaptability and social integration. The distinction will also prevent any failure to attend because of paid employment from automatically being seen as low motivation or poor belonging.

Longitudinal research can help answer questions that cannot be answered through an interview alone. Thiry et al. (2025) tracked the experiences of 27 STEM transfer students for four years, including aspects related to navigating, social connections, and institutional supports throughout a period which includes COVID-19. In contrast, the present students' accounts reflect the situation at the time of their interviews. A stated experience of feeling relieved or connected does not mean ongoing adjustment.

Belonging as recognition and participation

Holland Zahner and Harper (2025) documented distinctions in validation practices for transfer and non-transfer students and pointed to department-specific transfer programming as a validating context. Hernández Holliday et al. (2026) likewise stressed the role of student interpretive processes of internal orientation and external communication. Both of the research can justify an analysis of recognition as an institutional issue as well as a relational one. This analysis will explore how recognition is documented in its records without equating participation and belonging.

An important distinction for this analysis is participation itself and the meaning of participation. One can participate, hand in assignments, and assist their classmates while having some doubts about their belongingness to the institution. Alternatively, participation might be decreased due to other reasons than absence of interest to the institution. Participation will be analyzed as such along with individual experiences.

Help-seeking and Filipino relational meanings

Martinez et al. (2020) explore the context of Filipino mental health help-seeking in terms of social meanings and barriers to accessing services. Expanding on this approach in considering the transition to education necessitates examining purposes and audiences of the disclosure of the information. In the narratives of the students, nondisclosure is understood in connection to protecting a parent, avoiding pity, retaining competence or securing safety following abuse. These analyses of cases cannot be considered as findings of this literature review or as universal characteristics of Filipinos.

Sikolohiyang Pilipino allows for cultural understanding of human experience, language, and interactions. Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino (2000) introduce an approach based on the Filipino experiences and concepts of culture. This paper adopts the orientation provided by sikolohiyang pilipino to ensure attention to concepts such as nahihiya and pakikisama as well as to meanings underlying thankfulness and respect. The paper does not consider hiya as purely pathological or assume uniformity of Filipino values. It also does not view all instances of care as utang na loob.

Transition theory and the study focus

Schlossberg's (1981) conceptualization frames adaptation in terms of transitions. The latter theoretical framework uses Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies as the domains of consideration for transition (Anderson et al., 2012). They provide queries regarding the extent of control of a person regarding a transition, previous experience, available resources, and modes of response. In the

current analysis, however, they act as sensitizing questions rather than the coding framework. The thematic organization will be derived from the case data prior to looking at its relations to those domains.

In general, these literatures indicate the significance of studying education transition in terms of institutional context, acknowledgment, and meanings of seeking help. The interpretative question guiding the current research would be how these matters relate to each other in terms of transfer students who are trying to preserve their previous efforts, valued connections, and sense of self in a different environment.

Research questions

The central question is: How do Filipino transfer students describe educational redirection and the meanings they attach to participation and support?

Three questions guide the analysis: (1) What circumstances of educational redirection are documented, and how are their meanings for self, progress, and relationships represented? (2) How are academic participation, peer belonging, and disclosure of difficulty represented following the documented transition? (3) What responses, constraints, and experiences or offers of support are described across the cases? Counseling implications are developed from these findings as practice proposals rather than treated as an additional empirical outcome.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design and orientation

The qualitative interview analysis in this study has adopted a comparative case-oriented framework to analyze the stories of the educational redirection of the Filipino transfer students. The stories of each transfer student interviewee are considered as the person-in-context cases bound within the context described in the research interview. Individual circumstances are captured through within-case reading and the common and different interpretations among cases are analyzed through cross-case analysis.

The constructivist-interpretivist approach acknowledges that the accounts from interviews are constructed through the interactions between the interviewee and the interviewer. Transcription and analysis of the interviews are also subject to researcher interpretation as to how the experiences were perceived and described. Student accounts are differentiated from the researchers' observations and interpretations.

Source material and case reconciliation

The case files include the complete interview transcripts of 12 subjects. These transcripts include the complete interviews that have been analyzed in this paper. The other sources of information included in the research materials are the audio recordings, full transcripts, and handwritten notes. The research team has verified the accuracy of the quotes included in the manuscript. A discrepancy in the names of Case 3 has been sorted out by using the letter Z. The statements made by students, researcher narration, and observations are considered different types of materials.

Selection started with an invitation to transfer students. Criteria included age over 18 years, enrollment status, identification as a transfer student, readiness for interviews, and informed consent for the interview and data analysis. There were twelve volunteers selected by the researcher who conducted the interviews. Twenty other respondents failed to follow up because of scheduling problems with the interview. Interviews were done during the first two months of a semester, which contrasts with transfer duration; Paolo had been a transfer student for about a year while a number of students indicated three to four months. Transfer had been done prior to interrupting studies and resuming studies after that by Nico, who thus fits into transfer experience.

The interviews were conducted by two researchers, a counseling student and a counselor, using online methods. The interviews were conducted for research; counseling services were offered to the students. Neither researcher knew any participant beforehand, and both had been trained in interviewing during their counseling preparation. An interview guide developed by the researcher was used for the interviews. These interviews took about 45 minutes, were conducted in English and Filipino languages, and audio recorded with some handwritten notes. Transcriptions were conducted in their entirety. The entire content of the interviews was the analytic data. Relevant data was translated and verified by the researchers. Transcript of the entire interview is accessible to the research team, but it is not publicly available.

Cross-case comparison focuses on institutional movement and any program change, disruption, or return in the process.

Analytic development

The analysis was iterative and based on reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021, 2022, 2023). The full interview transcripts were read for whole case understanding, focusing on issues such as the transition, engagement, reactions, strengths, and unanswered questions. Two coders independently came up with codes and interpretations based on the complete transcripts and then discussed their interpretations with the researchers based on the full transcripts and within-case memos. Alternative interpretations and the refining of themes' boundaries were part of these discussions. These are seen as collaborative interpretations rather than testing of an objectively correct coding procedure. Four themes capture cross-case themes while recognition of interests, contributions, voice, and circumstances remains cross-cutting.

Reflexivity and trustworthiness

The researchers' counseling training ensured that distress, coping, and support were key considerations when analyzing the narratives. However, this perspective also carries the danger of viewing constrained participation as a personal deficit. The analysis, therefore, differentiates between practical constraints and expected judgment and includes narratives that challenge a deficit-based interpretation: Sofia continued her participation, Andrea refused an invitation, Z was faced with paid work constraints, and some students narrated supportive interactions. The Filipino relational concepts are analyzed in relation to specific narratives and contexts rather than assumed in advance as explanations.

The analysis is presented in a manner that facilitates critical evaluation based on case identification, exemplars, explicit definition of themes, and consideration of alternative meanings. Credibility is assured by the inclusion of full interview narratives and researcher-verified quotes, along with the consideration of those narratives that challenge the interpretation. Transferability is assured by de-identified contextual details. Analytical decisions are clearly reported, thereby enhancing dependability and confirmability. Table 2 offers a thematic summary and examples of links to the cases.

The Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research guide the documentation of context, researcher characteristics, data collection, analysis, ethics, and limitations (O'Brien et al., 2014). Collaborative interpretation is defined in ways that are compatible with reflexive thematic analysis, where researcher interpretation is a source and agreement statistics are not a universal quality criterion (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Ethics and confidentiality

Consent was sought from participants for interviewing and research purposes. The use of pseudonyms is done and any information about school, town, place of work, and program is reduced wherever possible. Materials obtained through interviews for research purposes and identity maps are confidential and not available publicly.

RESULTS

The recorded ages vary between 18 and 23 years (M = 20.1). Table 1 shows the conditions under which transfer is experienced along with the timings. The timings are noted by making a reference to the semester, transfer experience, or returning back to studies and do not reflect a standardized time measure of transfer.

Case characteristics are presented in Table 1.

These four themes explore the theme of educational diversion in light of retaining an important self amidst the new participation and relationship. The first theme is about the implications of that new direction on competence, agency, past effort, and care. The second theme is about access to group and regular participation. The third theme is about the relational implications of vulnerability to difficulty. The fourth theme is about the struggle and limitations involved in navigating those stakes. These themes intersect within each case, yet each theme represents its own distinct organizing theme.

There is also a pattern of recognition that is cross-cutting where interests, efforts, boundaries, or practical realities are noted.

The themes and illustrative evidence are summarized in Table 2.

Living with a redirected path while defending a valued self

The transitions themselves went beyond mere movement. In some cases, they disrupted the meaning of prior success, current decision-making, or family obligation with regard to the individual student. Paolo was troubled by completed courses not getting recognized: "It seems like all of my past efforts are forgotten." The issue involved both recognition of effort that was completed and the added effort now required. Muting posts from old classmates and avoiding inquiries into graduation were discussed in addition to anxiety over comparison to their advancement (Case 6).

Selecting the move did not take away the responsibility of having to explain it. Sofia showed increased interest in her new program and participation, but an easily rectifiable mistake raised the issue of whether the transfer was necessary. Sofia said: "Parang kailangan kong maging excellent para mapatunayan na tama ang paglipat ko" ["It is as if I need to be excellent to prove that transferring was the right decision"; English translation]. This shows how current performance relates to defending past decisions. Similarly, Miguel's unknown exams threatened his identity as a top performer. Both cases show how academic difficulty acquires significance beyond the immediate challenge (Cases 12 and 2).

In Liza's case, it was decision-making voice. While Liza talked about problems with communication regarding late arrival, she also talked about transfer that had been forced upon her by her parents. It could be hard for Liza to enjoy the new school because it could feel like accepting the decision that did not take into account her experiences. Consequently, withdrawal from organizations could have different meaning than in Andrea's fear of approaching already existing friends. Finally, Daniel's agreement with an affordable program could have been incomplete ownership because he was under pressure financially and did not examine the curriculum (Cases 5 and 9).

Jessa extends the theme even further. In her history, it was important for Jessa to preserve education and at the same time maintain a relationship with someone she cared about. The desire to have some rest could be interpreted as being ungrateful to the

grandmother who raised Jessa. Consequently, the chosen way was not just the result of making a decision to defend or undo anything but rather sustaining something that was becoming harder to manage.

Being enrolled while remaining at the edge of belonging

The enrollment after a transition was not a guarantee for the participant gaining entry into the informal relationships and processes of the setting. As reported by Andrea, "everyone has someone already." Additionally, she stated "nakikisama naman ako, pero parang di ako belong" [''I do try to get along with others, but I feel as though I do not belong'']. She proceeded to work individually, but avoided participating in any group presentation. The difference between presence and her inability to approach other students is highlighted in her testimony. This, together with her refusal of a lunch invitation, makes the assumption of complete exclusion problematic (Case 1).

For Trisha, information was an aspect of accessibility. With an unpredictable schedule, she belonged to three different classes, and announcements were disseminated in multiple chats and small groups. Moving the project meeting resulted in an accusation of being unreliable because she was unaware of the change due to lack of communication. Trisha's problem cannot be attributed only to criticism sensitivity; there is evidence of a communication system which made participation more difficult. Constantly checking and taking screenshots was an effort to prove reliability under such system (Case 10).

In Amina's story, membership relates to language and recognition. She mentioned her past confidence in discussions, her imitation of accent and conversations that carried on without any explanation. Her less speaking thus cannot be considered a result of her quiet nature. On the other hand, she was able to distinguish classmates who assisted her from those who translated for her. This case highlights uneven experiences within the receiving environment instead of an exclusively unwelcoming institution (Case 7).

Carlo's cautiousness also involved a unique past. Ridicule and pictures from the past rendered laughter, invitations, and phone calls hard to understand. He knew for sure that the present class fellows did not do what the previous class fellows did. Similarly, Nico's reluctance differed in different settings since requesting from experienced co-workers at the workplace was acceptable, but requesting from young fellows was risky for his reputation. This makes it clear why "low participation" is not a sufficient case explanation (Cases 4 and 11).

Keeping difficulty private to protect relationships and dignity

There were multiple relational motivations behind nondisclosure. Andrea kept the information about how she felt at school from her mother because she did not want her mother to feel guilty. Daniel kept his parents' worries about whether he would remain in school from them because his parents appeared relieved that he did not leave school even when they experienced hard times. Miguel kept his bad grades from his family because he was afraid that he would disappoint his family (Cases 1, 9, and 2).

Disclosures could have also led to humiliation. In Z's words, "Nahihiya akong sabihin na kapos kami" ["I feel embarrassed to say that we are short of money"; English translation]. According to Z, the reason why she wanted to avoid any forms of pity was that she wanted to avoid appearing as though she had been using difficulty as an excuse for something else. While the problems with meeting related to her work as a source of income, the problem with disclosure came from the interpretation of absence as unwillingness on the part of her peers. Nico stated, "They think I know what I am doing because I am older."

Carlo's privacy had a direct link with safety after mistreatment. In case of Liza, her brief responses were an attempt to prevent a family fight, even though she knew that it would make comprehension difficult. Jessa struggled to communicate fatigue for fear of being misunderstood as lacking love and appreciation. Thus, the reason and recipient for silence have importance; disclosure to peers, parents, counselors, or even family members has different potential ramifications.

There are also instances of selective openness. There are some instances where the individual accounts of interaction with specific friends or family members have been useful. Z felt lighter after a former classmate had listened to him without pity. Thus, protective silence is considered as a way of managing disclosures in certain contexts, and not as an indication that the students refused help or that their families were always unsupportive (Case 3).

Managing threat through costly effort and restricted participation

Students' narratives suggest an effort to alleviate any immediate discomfort or to maintain an important self-image. Some of them put more effort into their studies, some distanced themselves, and some did both. Miguel studied later, rechecked his homework, and refrained from consulting. Z accepted additional project responsibilities and occasionally refrained from responding to group messages. Nico spent extended hours resolving platform issues by himself and refused to join in studying. This combination refutes any clear-cut distinction between overcompensators and withdrawers (Cases 2, 3, and 11).

Several of the students mentioned temporary relief followed by further troubles. Andrea refused lunch although she wanted to participate and was momentarily relieved before crying. Carlo observed people stop inviting him when he ignored their requests and interpreted this as their lack of interest in him. Daniel postponed preparations because he might drop the course and used poorer grades as further evidence for his bad fit. These relationships are mentioned within the particular case; the interview accounts do not establish the causality here (Cases 1, 4, and 9).

For Trisha, accepting more work was easier than trying to explain why she could not take on any more, and her case suggests that more work leads to frustration and stress. The exhaustion experienced by Jessa included both the demands placed on her as a caregiver and also the difficulty of letting go of control when her brother tried to help out. There is no way to eliminate a scheduling conflict or a relative's need for care by changing the interpretation of the situation. Counseling interventions must then include not only changes in expectation and fear, but also practical redistribution and coordination (Cases 10 and 8).

Sofia makes an important modification to this analysis. She kept going to activities and participating in her program even while asking repeatedly for assurance regarding mistakes. Her case indicates that it is possible to participate and still be uncertain. The commonality here is the price of handling what the problem says about oneself; how this plays out behaviorally may differ (Case 12).

Moments of recognition offer possibilities for continuity

The stories consist of incidents which offer moments of recognition that are contrary to the purely deficit approach of telling their stories. Andrea had a better flow when questioned regarding her drawing even if she doubted the intentions of the classmate after. Amina talked about mutual contributions in terms of learning languages from one another with one of her roommates. Carlo remained in a photo since his classmate had asked for permission for use. Trisha received a sense of relaxation due to questions about a doable schedule asked by one of her group mates. All these experiences offered a variety of forms of recognition which range from an existing interest, language contribution, control over exposure, and practical constraints (Cases 1, 7, 4, and 10).

Nico offers a story about how he received help concerning a specific task and a platform shortcut from one of his class mates. This can be understood to represent how receiving help might go alongside competence rather than implying that being helped removed all of his fears away. Also, the experience of Paolo shows relief from comparisons while helping a classmate in need (Cases 11 and 6).

A performed supportive encounter differs from being offered a support opportunity. The opportunity to be introduced to the arts organization by Andrea, the invitation to an industry event by Daniel, and the offer of the platform tour by Nico's sister all refer to opportunities recorded in the research interview. However, it does not mean whether these resources were actually used by the students. For this reason, the resources offered, the support received, and hopes articulated are differentiated from each other.

DISCUSSION

In all cases, the educational re-direction process entailed negotiation of the continuity of the self that was valued: figuring out how to be part of the new situation without negating past effort, past relationships, past competence, or past responsibilities. This synthesis links the themes without turning them into steps. The unrecognized subjects of Paolo's story are the acknowledgment of previous effort; the indecision of Andrea is about the risk of approaching others; the silence of Z is about dignity and a real workplace problem as well.

Redirection and the meaning of agency

Choice and constraint reflect the context for decision-making without defining the significance of the transition. For example, Sofia's self-initiated relocation was marked by a greater degree of interest and pressure to legitimize her choice; Liza's required relocation by her attempts to make her voice heard. This means that Theme 1 focuses on the significance the individual ascribes to their current performance in terms of the stakes involved. From the standpoint of counseling practice, this is important to consider both why this move happened and what its significance as failure or success means in regard to the student's previous choice and desired identity.

In terms of Schlossberg's concept of transition and its subsequent development in the "4S" approach, these questions become more situationalized. Indeed, Schlossberg considers such elements of situation, person, support system, and strategies when addressing transitions (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1981). The added information is that the individual interprets previous investment, a mistake in action or choice, and the offered help in a way that defines their stakes in these aspects of transition.

The analysis of Higgerson (2026) links shifts in major to support and coping using transition theory. The current study adds to this by understanding how identity, limited disclosure, and practicalities meet within transfer experiences. An exploration of these intersections among better-defined groups of transitions could assist in determining where comparable meanings emerge in varied circumstances.

Belonging includes the conditions for participation

Theme 2 considers felt belonging as well as the circumstances of participation. Trisha's disjointed announcements and Z's schedule involve information and timing, and Andrea's declined invitation involves expected rejection despite having the chance to participate. This comparison adds to the institutional focus on Holland Zahner and Harper (2025) and the negotiated understanding of belonging of Hernández Holliday et al. (2026). Additionally, it makes clear distinct practice responses: an easily accessible communication system is one response while a more secure introduction or recognition of a boundary is another response.

Ching et al. (2021) discussed academic adaptability in conjunction with social integration problems. Current instances also include competencies along with stress, although not academic achievement or transfer shock. Drawing skills, practical skills, paid labor, care, and academic interest all continue to be useful for case interpretation.

Relational disclosure without cultural determinism

Theme Three defines silence based on considerations related to what could be threatened by disclosing. Parental concern, pity avoidance, security from abuse, and expectations of reliability are separate but interconnected reasons. While Martinez et al. (2020) provide context for the barrier to Filipino help-seeking related to their mental health needs, the avoidance of revealing a work-related conflict to their peers does not equal the lack of seeking professional help. Although both Pe-Pua and Protacio-Marcelino (2000) call for cultural consideration of the meaning of the value in question, none of the sources suggests that one cultural value explains all cases provided above.

It could be appropriate and harmful to keep silent for self-protection reasons. Acceptance of the reason does not have to mean acceptance of continuous keeping silent as well. It could be reasonable for a counselor to identify people whose involvement is welcome to the student, the issue to be protected, and the amount of information to be disclosed for specific pragmatic purposes.

Recognition and the experience of support

Theme 4 relates effort and constraint without categorizing students into coping strategies. Miguel took additional effort and avoided consultation; Sofia engaged and asked for assurance repeatedly. Encounters that provide help may also differentiate between recognition of ability, interests, willingness, or constraints despite persistent ambiguity about more general issues. This means that both the nature of help provided and its availability should receive consideration. Reciprocal exchanges mattered in some cases, but unconditional help and practical coordination of institutions are still important practice suggestions.

The longitudinal design used by Thiry et al. (2025) demonstrates how networks and institutional support can be analyzed. In this case, a helping encounter, a missed opportunity, and continued adjustment remain different claims. Follow-up research might focus on resources used by students, useful encounters, and changes in practical circumstances that accompanied participation or disclosure.

Post-research interpretive framework

The Redirected but Not Erased approach pulls together the key ideas of negotiating a continuity of valued self. In Figure 1, the four themes are positioned within this key idea and are situated within institutional context, decision-making circumstances, and familial and professional obligations. The theme of recognition cuts across all the others because recognition occurs in contexts that involve different problems - a draw interest, a language contribution, consent to take a photograph, or a realistic schedule for working.

The domains of the proposed interpretive framework are summarized in Table 3.

By continuity, we mean the interpretative option where one remains connected to the present situation and holds on to one's valued interests while acknowledging previous hard work, having a voice, and sustaining connections in spite of manageable demands. Continuity is neither an observable result nor does it suggest that one's distress has been settled. The links in our diagram show the connections between interpretations which may exist simultaneously within an interpretation. They do not indicate any sequence or cause-and-effect relationship, nor that each and every student shared all themes.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELING AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Clarify the meaning and practical demands of the transition

At intake, a guidance counselor could document the route, timing, and perceived choice involved in the transition; what earlier effort or relationships the student wishes to preserve; and what current difficulty seems to mean. A brief participation review could identify uncredited subjects, conflicting schedules, platform difficulties, and paid-work or caregiving demands. These are proposed additions to intake, not procedures evaluated in this study.

Make practical participation possible

Given the consent of the student, the guidance office can arrange for a contact person for classroom announcements, an academic adviser for credits/program information, and the appropriate office for financial aid. In a particular situation involving group work problems, the counselor and the student can develop an arrangement that would be possible to schedule. The platform demonstration can be provided without necessitating the student to divulge her/his difficulties.

Support disclosure with agency

A counselor can assist a student in selecting a recipient who will be safe, determining the minimum amount of data that can be shared, and practicing one particular request that can be made. It may involve making a request about finding an available meeting schedule or demonstrating how the online process works. Confidentiality and its limitations should be discussed first before involving the student's family members, educators, or peers.

Build on existing interests and contributions

The introduction by either a peer or faculty member may be premised on prior interest or competency such as drawing, language exchange or practical skills. Help should be extended regardless of whether the learner is willing to reciprocate. Ensure that consent is gained on the introduction and all details; indicate whether it was just offered, accepted or utilized.

Review change over time

At a predetermined follow-up meeting, the guidance department could evaluate if the selected referral had been implemented successfully, if announcements became available, if scheduling was possible, and if the student received any safety improvements for accessing services or participation. This is what the service indicators could be. Their use and effectiveness will need their own evaluation since no counseling program was evaluated here.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The results are placed within the context of narratives provided by 12 transfer volunteers with varying responsibilities and backgrounds, such as program change and reentry after disruption. Selection by the researcher and failure to participate because of scheduling reduce the diversity of viewpoints presented. The level of description allows consideration of applicability to similar circumstances rather than prevalence or comparison across transition populations.

The interviews provide a comprehensive account of the memories and meanings that the participants made at a certain stage in their educational transitions. Modifications in participation, disclosure, and support after the interviews were conducted are not within the purview of the study. Follow-up interviews may have expanded the narrative about change, while stories by students who found it comfortable would have broadened the scope of the narrative. Family viewpoints could have been included under different confidentiality guidelines.

CONCLUSION

These stories depict education redirection as an attempt to keep learning but still have their valuable self-concept intact. Students found past achievement, having a say in decisions made, care from their families, and dignity relevant in this process of engagement and disclosure. Continued membership and engagement on their own did not guarantee secure membership for the participants involved, and restricted participation did not convey a single meaning in each context. These differences are addressed through the theoretical framework, and thus the importance of relational recognition as well as practical access is stressed for the counseling process. The relevance of the framework for practice consists in providing more targeted suggestions.

STATEMENTS AND DECLARATIONS

Data availability. Audio recordings, full interview transcripts, complete interview records, participant-level narratives, and identity mappings are not publicly available. Access to research records remains subject to applicable institutional confidentiality, authorization, and consent conditions; access on reasonable request is not guaranteed.

Use of AI tools. AI tools assisted with literature searching and organization, language revision, and preparation of the framework diagram. The authors are responsible for verifying source material, analytic interpretations, citations, and the final text.

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TABLES

Table 1. Documented case characteristics

Case	Age	Redirection circumstance	Timing as recorded
1 Andrea	19	Family relocation	Two months
2 Miguel	20	Student-initiated academic transfer	Six weeks into semester
3 Z	21	Financially constrained private-to-public transfer	Beginning of semester
4 Carlo	19	Transfer following peer mistreatment	Six weeks
5 Liza	18	Parent-directed move closer to home	Three months
6 Paolo	22	Relocation with uncredited subjects and delay	Approximately one year
7 Amina	19	Student-initiated move across regions	Beginning of semester
8 Jessa	21	Move closer to home for caregiving	Four months
9 Daniel	20	Financially constrained program redirection	Three months
10 Trisha	20	Transfer for program specialization	Beginning of semester
11 Nico	23	Transfer followed by work interruption and subsequent return	Returned in the current semester after a two-year work interruption; transfer preceded interruption
12 Sofia	19	Student-initiated transfer for program fit	Three months

Table 2. Themes and research question alignment

Theme or cross-cutting pattern	Central meaning	Illustrative evidence
1 Living with a redirected path while defending a valued self	Preserving competence, earlier effort, decision-making voice, and valued responsibilities under changed conditions.	Paolo's lost credit; Sofia's decision justification; Liza's voice; Jessa's care
2 Being enrolled while remaining at the edge of belonging	The gap between enrollment and access to relationships, communication, and everyday participation.	Andrea's guest status; Trisha's communication access; Amina's language experience
3 Keeping difficulty private to protect relationships and dignity	Managing what disclosure might put at risk for a relationship, dignity, safety, or a valued role.	Andrea's protection of her mother; Z's fear of pity; Nico's dependable identity
4 Managing threat through costly effort and restricted participation	Combining extra effort and restricted participation while negotiating feared exposure and actual demands.	Miguel's study and silence; Z's work conflict; Daniel's delayed preparation
Cross-cutting recognition pattern	Recognition of interests, contributions, voice, or constraints offers possibilities for continuity.	Amina's language exchange; Nico's practical exchange; Trisha's acknowledged schedule

Table 3. Domains of the proposed interpretive framework

Domain	Interpretive focus	Illustrative evidence
Circumstances of redirection	Institutional transfer and any accompanying program change, interruption, or return; choice, timing, and constraint	Relocation in Andrea and Paolo; affordability in Z and Daniel; transfer, interruption, and return in Nico
Continuity and meaning	What progress, errors, help, or limits imply about a valued self	Prior effort in Paolo; decision justification in Sofia; dependability in Nico
Participation and disclosure	Managing exposure, relationships, effort, and actual demands	Selective silence in Andrea and Z; overlapping responses in Miguel and Trisha
Support in context	Accessibility, meaning, experience, and uptake of assistance	Experienced language exchange in Amina; practical exchange in Nico; a workable-schedule inquiry in Trisha

Figure captions

Figure 1. Post-research framework of negotiating continuity.

Note. Links show conceptual relationships among coexisting meanings. Recognition is an experienced moment or possibility for support, not evidence of sustained adjustment.

Figures

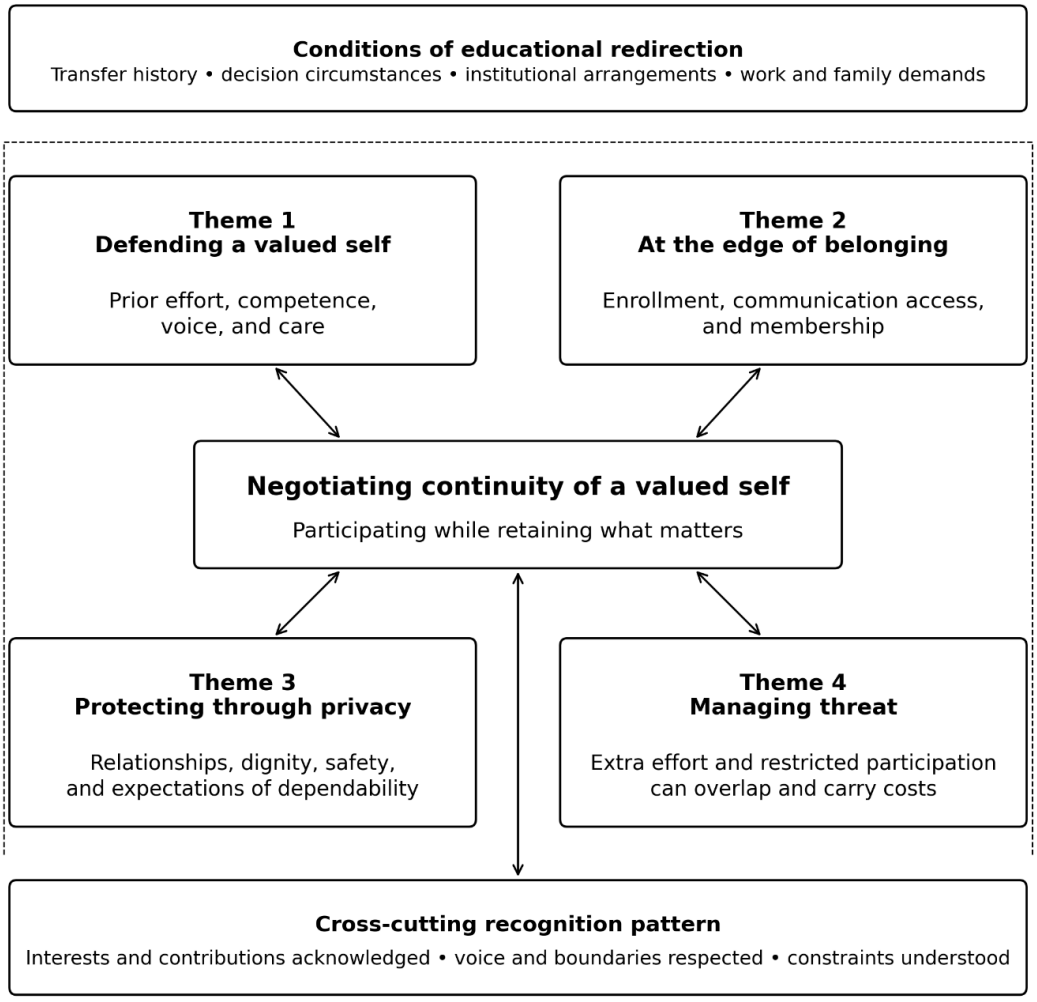


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