



The Influence of Parental Absence on Academic Achievement: An Empirical Analysis

Khalid D.Daud*

Universitas Negeri Mindanao, Kota Marawi, Lanao del Sur

*Correspondence: E-mail: daud.kd02@s.msumain.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

Family plays a vital role in shaping the emotional, social, and academic development of students. This study investigates the impact of parental absence—due to divorce, employment, or geographical separation—on the academic performance of selected secondary students at Rufo de la Cruz Integrated School. Using a descriptive survey method, data were gathered from 60 randomly selected students aged 15–17. Findings reveal that 71.7% of respondents came from low-income households, with most experiencing disrupted emotional support due to absent parents. This absence significantly affected students' motivation, concentration, and academic outcomes. The study underscores the importance of emotional stability and family involvement in promoting academic success and highlights the need for targeted support programs to assist students coping with parental absence.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Family plays a crucial role in the emotional, social, and intellectual development of individuals, serving as a foundation of support, guidance, and strength. However, various circumstances, such as divorce, employment demands, and geographical separation, can lead to parental absence, disrupting this essential support system. When parents are not present, children often experience emotional distress, heightened stress, and a lack of motivation, making it challenging for them to concentrate and excel academically. Addressing the effects of parental absence on students' academic performance requires an in-depth exploration of family structure and the unique challenges these students face. The impact of parental absence extends beyond academic grades to factors such as attendance, motivation, and overall well-being. Studies have shown that emotional support and parental guidance are instrumental in shaping students' attitudes toward learning (Damanik, 2024). The absence of this support often leads to feelings of isolation, lack of motivation, and difficulties in concentration, adversely affecting academic performance and emotional well-being (Hidayati *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, research by Saikia (2017) found that students from broken or single-parent homes tend to have lower academic achievements and unfavorable attitudes toward learning.

Family background is a significant determinant of a student's academic success. Children raised in homes where parents are actively involved in their education often exhibit better academic outcomes. According to research by Velez and Jones (1997), strong parent-child relationships, particularly concerning educational matters, lay a firm foundation for academic achievement. Parental involvement, defined as active engagement in a child's academic life, has been associated with improved student morale, better behavior, and higher academic performance (Tuturop & Sihotang, 2023). Dr. Toby Parcel emphasized that parental involvement can even offset deficiencies in school resources, underscoring the critical role of parents in a child's education. Moreover, the quality of relationships and communication within the family also plays a pivotal role. A lack of a strong support system can hinder a student's ability to seek academic assistance or discuss educational challenges. Children without adequate guidance and support may lack motivation and feel disconnected from the learning process, further diminishing their academic performance (Nasution *et al.*, 2023). According to the Center for Child Well-Being (2010), family involvement not only enhances a child's academic outcomes but also promotes positive behavior and social adjustment.

This study aims to examine the effect of parental absence on the academic performance of selected students at Rufo de la Cruz Integrated School. The study demonstrates that parental absence has a considerable impact on the academic performance of secondary students at Rufo de la Cruz Integrated School. An analysis of students' socio-demographic profiles, including age, gender, year level, parents' occupations, and family income, revealed that the absence of parents—whether due to divorce, employment, or geographical separation—significantly disrupts emotional support, lowering students' morale, motivation, and focus. Consequently, these disruptions hinder academic achievement and affect behavior and social adjustment. The findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to enhance emotional well-being and academic success among students experiencing parental absence.

2. METHODS

2.1. Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey research design to examine the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. This research method effectively captures the current conditions within the scope of the study and identifies the relevant variables for analysis. The descriptive approach was purposively selected to facilitate systematic data gathering and provide a comprehensive understanding of the research context.

2.2. Sampling Procedure and Participants

The researcher employed a convenience sampling technique, selecting participants based on their availability and willingness to participate, which ensured ease of access and ethical consideration. Although convenience sampling was applied initially, the actual selection of respondents was conducted through simple random sampling, enhancing the representativeness of the sample. This approach aimed to foster honest and genuine responses by relying on participants who were willing to contribute, ensuring the collection of reliable primary data. The study focused on selected Secondary High School students at Rufo de la Cruz Integrated School, targeting a sample population of 60 respondents who were randomly chosen from this group.

2.3. Research Instrument

The study utilized a survey questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: the first section gathered information on the respondents' socio-demographic profile, while the second part consisted of statements designed to assess the effects of parental absence on the academic performance of selected students. This instrument was chosen to facilitate convenient and efficient data collection from the respondents.

2.4. Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher collected data using a self-constructed questionnaire, supported by references to books and unpublished theses related to the study. Respondents from Rufo de la Cruz Integrated School were approached during their free time to complete the survey, and questionnaires were retrieved immediately afterward. Data analysis involved organizing and reviewing responses for accuracy, using descriptive statistics for demographic summaries and inferential statistics, such as ANOVA or t-tests, to identify significant differences. Correlation and regression analyses were conducted to explore relationships among variables and their predictive impacts.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

This research study followed ethical guidelines. The respondents' participation was voluntary. They were to opt to dismiss themselves from the study at any point in time they felt uncomfortable. Their participation was protected from harm: physical, social, psychological, and all other forms of harm were kept to an absolute minimum. The dignity and well-being of elementary teachers who responded were always protected. The research data remained confidential throughout the study, and the respondents' rights were

protected, ensuring scientific or academic integrity. Furthermore, to ensure that this research study is free of plagiarism or research misconduct, proper result communication must be practiced.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Parental absence

This study is anchored in several theoretical frameworks that provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing students' academic performance in the context of parental absence. These theories include attachment theory, social capital theory, resilience theory, and bio-ecological theory, each offering a unique perspective on the dynamics at play.

Attachment theory emphasizes the significance of long-term emotional bonds, particularly between a parent and child, and offers a psychological explanation for these relationships. According to this theory, developed by British psychologist John Bowlby, humans are innately driven to form bonds with caregivers, and these early attachments have lasting effects throughout life (Nugroho *et al.*, 2021). Bowlby described attachment as a "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings," which underscores the importance of early caregiver relationships in shaping future social and emotional well-being.

Social capital theory, originally introduced by Bourdieu (1986), extends the concept of capital beyond economic assets to include the exchange of social resources. Bourdieu's work explored the interaction between individuals' values, preferences, and ways of interacting (*habitus*) and the broader social environment or field in which these interactions occur (Warwick *et al.*, 2017). Social capital consists of resources derived from group membership and social networks. Ream and Palardy (2008) highlighted that social-networks facilitate the exchange of information, influence beliefs, and enforce behavioral norms. The size of a parent's social network often predicts their level of involvement in their children's education (Sheldon, 2002). However, research has shown that lower-income families typically have less extensive networks, which may limit their ability to support their children's academic success (Agus *et al.*, 2020).

Resilience theory focuses on understanding how individuals adapt and thrive in the face of adversity, change, or loss. It emphasizes a strength-based approach, exploring why some people can recover and maintain positive functioning after experiencing significant challenges (Besari, 2022). Resilience has been examined across various fields, such as psychiatry, human development, and organizational change, emphasizing the adaptive capacity of individuals in response to life's difficulties.

Lastly, bio-ecological theory, developed by Bronfenbrenner, highlights the profound influence of social, community, and political contexts on human development (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Bronfenbrenner's model outlines five interconnected layers of influence, ranging from the immediate family environment to broader societal and cultural factors. His early work stressed the importance of interactions between home, family, and peers as central to child development (Bronfenbrenner, 2007). In his later years, he expanded the theory to include the chronosystem, emphasizing the role of time in shaping development through life transitions and cumulative experiences (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). The theory underscores that a child's development is shaped by both daily interactions and long-term life experiences. Together, these theories provide a robust foundation for understanding how parental

absence impacts academic performance, highlighting the interplay of emotional bonds, social networks, adaptive capacity, and environmental contexts.

3.2. Purposes of the Study

This study investigates the effects of parental absence on the academic performance of selected students at Rufo de la Cruz Integrated School. It seeks to address three main questions:

- (i) What is the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, considering factors such as age, gender, civil status, year level, parents' occupation, and family monthly income?
- (ii) What is the influence of parental absence on academic performance, specifically regarding students' morale, attitude, academic achievement, behavior, and social adjustment?
- (iii) What are the broader implications of these effects, and what insights and recommendations can be offered to develop effective support strategies for students impacted by parental absence?

3.3. Respondents' Demographic Profile

The following demographic profile data of respondents' can be seen in **Tabel 1**.

Table 1. Shows the Summary of Demographic Profile of the Respondents.

Profile	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
According to Age	15-17 years old	43	71.70%
	18-20 years old	16	26.70%
	21 years old and above	1	1.70%
	Total	60	100
According to Gender	Female	54	90.00%
	Male	6	10.00%
	Total	60	100
According to Year Level	Grade 10 Junior High	20	33.30%
	Grade 11 Senior High	20	33.30%
	Grade 12 Senior High	20	33.30%
	Total	60	100
Parents' Occupation	Business	19	31.70%
	Farmer	14	23.30%
	Government Employee	3	5.00%
	Private Employee	8	13.30%
	Self-Employee	16	26.70%
	Total	60	100
Family Monthly Income	Below 10,000	52	86.70%
	11,000-20,000	6	10.00%
	21,000-30,000	2	3.30%
	Total	60	100

Table 1. Illustrate that most of the respondents (71.7%) are aged 15-17, with smaller groups aged 18-20 (26.7%) and 21 or older (1.7%), showing a majority of younger adolescents in the sample. The gender distribution reveals a strong female majority (90%), suggesting that the results may primarily represent female viewpoints. Year-level data is evenly distributed across Grades 10, 11, and 12, ensuring a balanced representation among high school levels.

Parental occupations are varied, with 31.7% in business, 23.3% in farming, 26.7% self-employed, and fewer in government (5.0%) or private employment (13.3%), reflecting the socioeconomic backgrounds of respondents. Additionally, 86.7% of families earn below 10,000 PHP monthly, framing the sample within a low-income demographic that could impact educational resources. These characteristics provide a clear context for interpreting the study's findings within the broader socioeconomic and demographic landscape.

3.4. The Respondent's Responses on Effect of Family Absence in the Academic Performance of the Selected Secondary students in Rufo de la Cruz Integrated School

The results of this study underscore the varying effects of parental absence on students' emotional well-being, academic performance, and behavior, which aligns with the research highlighted in the literature. For example, the respondents' mixed responses regarding their motivation and enthusiasm for studies (mean = 3.15, SD = 1.1619; mean = 3.17, SD = 1.1375) reflect the inconsistent impact of family absence on emotional engagement with academic work. This is in line with the findings, who noted that the lack of parental support often results in fluctuating levels of motivation and emotional distress among students. While some students reported feeling less confident and challenged in maintaining academic progress (mean = 3.02, SD = 1.1122), others showed resilience and determination, with a mean of 3.67 (SD = 0.9684) on maintaining commitment to their studies. This suggests a nuanced relationship between family absence and student outcomes, as pointed out by (Besari, 2022), who emphasized that resilience plays a crucial role in how students adapt to such adversities.

Moreover, the respondents' general agreement that family absence does not significantly hinder their behavior and commitment to school activities (mean = 4.03, SD = 0.9014; mean = 4.05, SD = 0.8522) aligns with the concept of resilience theory, which highlights the capacity of students to maintain positive behaviors even in the face of emotional challenges. The study findings also echo the social capital theory introduced by Bourdieu (1986), where students with stronger internal resources and networks—such as a resilient attitude and proactive approach to their education—continue to exhibit good behavior and adhere to academic expectations, even without familial support. However, when it comes to academic achievement, the results reveal mixed impacts, with respondents expressing uncertainty (mean = 2.75, SD = 1.1735; mean = 2.92, SD = 1.3186) regarding how family absence affects their academic performance. This mirrors findings, who reported that students from broken or single-parent homes tend to show varying academic outcomes, depending on their individual circumstances. Some students felt that their academic progress was hindered by family absence (mean = 3.62, SD = 1.1802), while others remained relatively unaffected. The research also indicates that family absence may disrupt students' concentration and overall academic success (mean = 3.28, SD = 1.2226), further supporting the claim that emotional distress, caused by the lack of parental presence, can adversely affect academic focus and performance.

On social adjustment, the results show that students were "Undecided" regarding their social behavior, with varying levels of difficulty in adjusting to school life when family is absent (mean = 3.18, SD = 1.11). This reflects the importance of attachment theory in explaining how the absence of strong familial bonds can lead to mixed social adjustment outcomes. Students who lack emotional bonds with their families may experience discomfort in forming

connections with peers and teachers, which is supported by the respondents' uncertainty in their social interactions (mean = 3.05, SD = 1.21).

Finally, the results of this study are consistent with the existing body of research that emphasizes the significant role of family presence in shaping students' emotional and academic outcomes. The emotional support and guidance that parents provide are critical to students' academic motivation, social adjustment, and overall well-being, and their absence can lead to varied responses, including challenges in concentration, academic achievement, and social integration. However, the resilience demonstrated by students in maintaining positive behavior and attitudes despite family absence highlights the importance of internal and external resources in overcoming adversity, as suggested by both resilience theory and social capital theory.

3.5. Discussion

This study employed a descriptive research methodology to investigate the effects of parental absence on the academic performance of selected Secondary students at Rufo de la Cruz Integrated School. The research focused on key areas, including the socio-demographic profiles of respondents, the influence of family absence on students' morale, attitudes, academic achievements, behaviors, and social adjustments, as well as the broader implications of these findings.

The results indicated that most respondents were aged 15 to 17, with a notable representation of female students, the majority of whom identified as single. Additionally, many participants were in their Senior High School Level, suggesting a well-distributed sample across different year levels. The analysis revealed that parental absence has complex effects on students' morale; while some reported feeling less motivated or confident in their academic abilities during periods of parental absence, many others demonstrated a positive attitude and commitment to their studies. Moreover, while respondents expressed uncertainty regarding the impact of parental absence on their academic performance, they generally exhibited good behavior and compliance with classroom rules. Intriguingly, the absence of parents did not appear to significantly impede social interactions, indicating the resilience of students as they navigate these challenges. Overall, these findings illuminate the multifaceted nature of parental absence, revealing both the difficulties and strengths that students experience in their academic journeys.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study identified that the majority of respondents, aged 15 to 17, were predominantly female and single, with parents primarily engaged in business and earning below 10,000 PHP monthly. Despite experiencing parental absence, students exhibited motivation and confidence in their academic pursuits, successfully maintaining good grades and actively participating in school activities. Their core values remained intact, and they adjusted socially without encountering significant challenges. These findings highlight the resilience of students facing family absence and underscore the importance of implementing supportive mechanisms to enhance their academic and social experiences.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that schools and educators promote a positive mindset among students regarding their academic performance. They should encourage

regular communication with family members to help students manage their emotions effectively.

AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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