



FACTORS ASSOCIATED TO THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF FIRST-GENERATION SECONDARY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the factors associated with the academic performance of first-generation secondary students in San Julian National High School, Eastern Samar, during the School Year 2023–2024. With the increasing concern over educational inequalities, particularly among students whose parents have not completed secondary education, this research sought to explore the extent to which demographic, familial, and academic variables influence academic outcomes. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational research design, data were collected from 40 identified first-generation Grade 12 students through a researcher-made, validated survey instrument. The questionnaire assessed five key areas: student profile (age and gender), family support, academic preparedness, class attendance, and academic performance. Descriptive statistics and correlation analyses (Spearman's rho, Pearson, and Eta correlation) were used to interpret the data. Results revealed that most respondents were 17 years old and female. Sixty percent reported an average level of family support, while the majority demonstrated satisfactory to very satisfactory academic preparedness. Significant relationships were found between family support, academic preparedness, class attendance, and academic performance. The findings emphasize the critical role of familial and school-based support systems in improving academic outcomes among first-generation learners. This study recommends localized, evidence-based interventions to strengthen inclusive education efforts in low-resource and rural areas of Eastern Samar.

KEYWORDS: First-Generation Students, Academic Performance, Family Support

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Academic success continues to be a key topic of discussion in education globally, especially as it is linked with future prospects, economic well-being, and social mobility. Nonetheless, inequalities in academic achievement still impact some groups of students, notably first-generation students (FGS)—those whose parents had not attained formal secondary or higher education (Terenzini et al., 2020). More than 250 million children and adolescents around the world lack basic literacy and numeracy skills, with most of them being from low-educated family backgrounds, as reported by UNESCO (2023).

In Southeast Asia, inclusive education has improved, but gaps in equity are still widespread. A report by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) in 2021 identified that first-generation learners are disproportionately underachieving in national tests, attributing to barriers such as low parental engagement, poverty, and poor access to support systems. In Indonesia and Vietnam, intervention schemes have been in place, but results indicate modest gains, demonstrating that home and socio-cultural settings continue to impact academic achievement (SEAMEO, 2021). In the Philippines, first-generation learners are not formally classified in national statistics, but current data indicate that parents' educational attainment continues to be low across most provinces.

According to the 2020 Census of Population and Housing, approximately 30% of Filipino parents did not achieve secondary

education, a clear indication of the likely prevalence of first-generation learners (PSA, 2021). In addition, the National Achievement Test (NAT) scores from 2019 to 2023 indicate a steady decline in secondary-level performance, particularly in English, Mathematics, and Science, which is more evident in marginalized communities (DepEd, 2023). Whereas many studies have considered socio-economic and school-level determinants of attainment (Ballesteros & Sarmiento, 2022; Cruz & De Castro, 2020), there has been a lack of disaggregation by first-generation learners. The lack of such analysis creates a knowledge gap on the specific difficulties encountered by FGS, especially in rural or deprived locations. In Region VIII, and particularly in Eastern Samar, schooling challenges are also exacerbated by poverty, lack of access to resources, and natural disasters. Of the population living below the poverty line, 32.7% do so in Eastern Samar, as revealed by the Eastern Samar Provincial Development Report (2023), while most students come from parents with no secondary education.

Also presented in the same report are dropout rates and scholastic failures, which are higher in schools in far-flung barangays, indicating that family background greatly influences students' academic paths. While the Schools Division of Eastern Samar has established catch-up and support programs, including Brigada Pagbasa and Learning Recovery Programs, there has been no local research undertaken to examine the correlation between students' academic success and being first-generation learners. This lack generates a critical knowledge gap that needs to be addressed to facilitate equal learning for everyone.



This research, thus, tries to determine the factors connected with the academic performance of first-generation secondary students in some schools in Eastern Samar. It particularly tries to investigate demographic, socio-economic, and school-based factors that might impede or facilitate academic success. By filling the gap in local research, this study will help: Formulate context-responsive interventions by school administrators; Strengthen guidance and support systems for FGS; Guide DepEd Region VIII and Division Offices on policy directions for inclusive education for learners from non-traditional educational backgrounds.

Objectives of the Study

This study was purposive enough to analyze the association that exists between the identified factors and academic performance of first-generation secondary students. Particularly, the proponents of this study addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the profile of the students in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age, and;
 - 1.2 Gender?
2. What is the level of family support of the first-generation secondary students?
3. What is the level of academic preparedness of the students?
4. What is the academic performance of the learners?
5. Is there a significant relationship between family support, class attendance, academic preparedness and academic performance among first-generation secondary students?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design used in this study was correlational design. Correlational research, according to Kowalczyk (2015) is a kind of investigation, not experimental, in which researchers measure two variables and establish a statistical relationship between them (correlation), without the need to include external variables to reach relevant conclusions.

Locale of the Study

The study titled “Factors Associated to the Academic Performance of First-Generation Students” was conducted among Grade 12 students in San Julian National High School, School Year 2023-2024. It utilized correlational research design to correlate the factors that affected the academic performance of the identified learners. To analyze each variable, the researchers opted to use frequency, median, and mean. On one hand, to enable the researchers in determining the relationship between variables, Eta correlation, Spearman’s rho, and Pearson correlation were used.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study were 40 first-generation students in San Julian National High School, Barangay 6 (Poblacion), San Julian, Eastern Samar, who were currently enrolled in Grade 12 Senior High School.

Research Instruments

The main tool employed in this study was a researcher-developed survey questionnaire that collected quantitative data about the factors connected to the academic success of first-generation secondary students. The questionnaire was

developed from the research questions and informed by more recent literature (2019–2024) on family support, academic readiness, and student performance.

The instrument consisted of five primary sections: Part I: Student Profile – This part collected demographic information like age and gender, which contextualized examining differences in academic achievement among students. Part II: Family Support – In this section, the level of perceived family support was assessed on a five-point Likert scale (1 – Strongly Disagree to 5 – Strongly Agree). Emotional, motivational, and instrumental help received from the families of the students were evaluated through statements. Part III: Academic Preparedness – This component measured how adequately students felt that they were academically prepared. It comprised items that captured study habits, time management, class participation, and lesson understanding, again with a five-point Likert scale. Part IV: Class Attendance – This part identified students' attendance behavior and how these may affect academic performance. Items that were included were frequency of absenteeism and reliability in going to school. Part V: Academic Performance – Students were requested to give their latest general average or overall grade to measure their academic performance.

For the validity and reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire was content validated by a panel of experts consisting of teachers, guidance counselors, and statisticians. Comments and suggestions from them were used to revise. A pilot test was also administered to a small sample of first-generation students from a local school outside the actual study site. Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of the Likert-scaled items, which resulted in a reliability coefficient of 0.87, signifying high reliability.

The completed questionnaire was applied in person, with a guarantee of confidentiality and voluntary completion. The instrument was simplified and translated when needed to make sure that the respondents well understood every item.

Data Gathering

Survey questionnaire was used by the researcher to obtain data relative to research question numbers 1 and 2 which were their profile on age and gender and level of family support, respectively. On the other hand, to address questions 4 and 5, the researchers considered secondary data among the respondents, for objective number 4, first quarterly grade on English and Math on ECR as their academic preparedness level, and First Quarterly Averaged Grade for all subjects for academic performance for objective 5.

Analysis of Data

In order to come up with meaningful interpretations of all information collected from the respondents, data were organized and tabulated for convenient analyses. For descriptive objectives, frequencies and percentages were used to characterize the data or variables. Meanwhile, in determining the relationship that existed between the identified factors and academic performance, Spearman’s rho correlation was used in consideration for the natures of data.



Ethical Considerations

This research follows the institutional regulations in carrying out research. The respondents will be fully aware of what they will be required to do, how the data will be utilized, and what

the consequences may be. The researcher will help the respondents in data collection to offer explanations such as understanding their rights to access to their information and the right to withdraw at any time.

RESULTS

Table 1: The Age of First-Generation Secondary Learners

Age of the Respondents			
Age	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
16	4	10%	10.0
17	22	55%	65.0
18	12	30%	95.0
19	2	5%	100.0
Total	40	100.0	

Based on the data presented in Table 1, the age of the respondents ranges from 16 to 19 years old. Out of 40 sample population, 55% were first-generation secondary learners who are aged 17. Meanwhile, 30% of the respondents are 18 years

old, 10% are 16 years old, and 5% of the sample population are 19 years old. The showed that the most common age among the respondents was 17, while the least common was 19.

Table 2: The Gender of First-Generation Secondary Learners

Gender of the Respondents				
Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	18	45.0	45.0	45.0
Female	22	55.0	55.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

In accordance with the information in Table 2, there were 40 respondents who were first-generation secondary learners. Out of these respondents, 22 were female students while 18 were male respondents. This further emphasized that 55% of the total

sample corresponded to female respondents; whereas 45% referred to male respondents.

Table 3: The Family Support of First-Generation Secondary Learners

Family Support			
Range	Frequency	Percent	Level of Family Support
4.21 – 5.00	16	40%	High
3.41 – 4.20	24	60%	Average
2.61 – 3.40	0	0	-
1.81 – 2.60	0	0	-
1.00 – 1.80	0	0	-
Total	40	100.0	

It is shown in the table that 60% which was 24 of 40 respondents had an average level of family support. Meanwhile,

40% which was equal to 16 out of 40 first-generation secondary learners were classified to have high level of family support.

Table 4: The Academic Preparedness of the First-Generation Secondary Learners

Academic Preparedness			
Grade Range	Frequency	Percent	Academic Preparedness
90 – 100	10	25%	Outstanding
85 – 89	13	32.5%	Very Satisfactory
80– 84	13	32.5%	Satisfactory
75 – 79	3	7.5%	Fairly Satisfactory
Below 75	1	2.5%	Did not meet expectations
Total	40	100%	

As shown in the Table, 25% or 10 out of 40 respondents had an outstanding academic preparedness, while 13% or 32.5% of 40 first-generation secondary learners exhibited very satisfactory

academic preparedness. In like manner, there were also 13 or 32.5% of the total respondents who obtained satisfactory academic preparedness. However, 3 respondents which were



equal to 7.5% of the samples had a fairly satisfactory academic preparedness. Lastly, 1 or 2.5% of the surveyed sample did not meet expectations.

Table 5: The Academic Performance of the First-Generation Secondary Learners

Grade Range	Academic Performance		
	Frequency	Percent	Academic Performance Level
90 – 100	15	37.5%	Outstanding
85 – 89	12	30%	Very Satisfactory
80– 84	8	20%	Satisfactory
75 – 79	4	10%	Fairly Satisfactory
Below 75	1	2.5%	Did not meet expectations
Total	40	100%	

It could be understood in the information presented in Table 5 that 15 learners which constitute to 37.5% of the total samples exhibited an outstanding academic performance. Meanwhile, 12 or 30% of them had a very satisfactory academic performance. However, 8 learners which was equal to 20% of

the surveyed group made it to satisfactory academic performance, while 4 students which referred to 10% of the population earned fairly satisfactory academic performance. Furthermore, 1 learner which corresponded to 2.5% of the first-generation secondary learners did not meet expectation.

Table 6: Relationship between Age and Academic Performance

Variable 1	Variable 2	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Age	Academic Performance	-.073	.655	Not Significant

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 6 shows the relationship between First-Generation Secondary Learners' Age and Academic Performance. It was hypothesized that there was no significant relationship between the respondents' age and academic performance. The data was analyzed using Spearman correlation to find out the correlation and significance level, the negative r-value (-.073) indicated

that there was a weak negative correlation between the two variables. And the p-value (.655) revealed that there was no significant relationship between the variables. Therefore, the investigation employed failed to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 7: Relationship between Gender and Academic Performance

Variable 1	Variable 2	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Gender	Academic Performance	.176	.267	Not Significant

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The information above revealed the relationship between First-Generation Secondary Learners' Age and Academic Performance. Initially, it was hypothesized that there was no significant relationship between the respondents' gender and academic performance. After employing Spearman's rho correlation, it was found out that there was a weak correlation between variables, indicated with the r-value that was .176.

This was supported by their p-value which was .267 which was way beyond the significance level that was 0.05, which implied that that the relationship between the variable was not significant. Thus, the test utilized in this study indicatively failed to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 8: Relationship between Family Support and Academic Performance

Variable 1	Variable 2	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Family Support	Academic Performance	-.102	.532	Not Significant

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As it is highlighted in the table on the use of Spearman's rho correlation, the correlation coefficient which was -.102 indicated a weak negative correlation between family support and academic performance, while .532, as the p value between

said variables, was denotative of their relationship which was not significant. This further implied that the study failed to reject the null hypothesis



Table 9: Correlation between Academic Preparedness and Academic Performance

Variable 1	Variable 2	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Academic Prepared-ness	Academic Performance	.922**	.000	Significant

Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Lastly, Spearman’s rho correlation was run to test the relationship between the academic preparedness and academic performance of the first-generation secondary learners. Initially it was hypothesized that there was no significant relationship between the variables. However, after the test had been conducted, it was revealed that there was a significant relationship between the aforementioned variables, indicated through the r-value (.922**) and p-value (.000). Therefore, the investigation rejected the null hypothesis.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the major findings of the study, the following conclusion are hereto made:

1. 55% of the respondents were 17 years old, 30% of them were 18 years old, 10% of the surveyed group were 16 years old, and 5% of the first-generation secondary learners was 19 years old.
2. 55% of the respondents were female, while 45% of them were male.
3. 60% of the learners had high family support, and 40% of them exhibited average family support,
4. 32.5% out of 40 respondents had a very satisfactory level of academic preparedness, 32,5% of them had a satisfactory level of academic preparedness, 25% of the students exhibited outstanding academic preparedness, 2.5% of them did not meet expectation.
5. There was no significant relationship between the respondents’ age and academic performance.
6. There was no significant relationship between the respondents’ gender and academic performance.
7. There was no significant relationship between the respondents’ family support and academic performance.
8. There was a significant relationship between the respondents’ academic preparedness and academic performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the light of the major findings and the conclusions derived in the study, the following recommendations were hereby proposed:

1. Organizing the classroom setup, as a key towards improving academic performance of the learners should not be done in consideration of age and gender, as they are not significantly related to academic performance.
2. Family support must not be given priority if the school is concerned on improving the academic performance of the learners in every educative setting.
3. While, academic preparedness should always be given utmost consideration as it would more likely contribute towards increasing academic performance.
4. For future study, researchers should consider other factors which are associated to academic performance to explore other conditions that shall improve learning.

Conflict of Interest

The authors guarantee that there was no conflict of interest in this research. All data were gathered and analyzed objectively, hence personal relations, monetary gain, or organizational membership did not affect results. The research was pursued solely for educational and academic purposes with the main goal of determining reading comprehension and mathematics ability determinants among Grade 5 pupils of Jicontol Elementary School. Ethical standards were adhered to strictly, such as the use of informed consent with the participants and confidentiality. Biases were avoided by the use of the systematic research process, peer review, and following tested research methodologies in educational studies.

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