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**EXPLAINING THE SOCIOLOGICAL FACTORS  
ASSOCIATED WITH THE CHILDREN'S SCHOOL PARTICIPATION  
IN ELEMENTARY LEVEL**

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**Abstract**

This paper identifies the factors such as demographic, economic, and sociological factors that influence the children's school participation in elementary level. Highlight of this study is explaining the context of mother's absence in a household as it influences the children's school participation. This paper utilized both quantitative and qualitative techniques in the data collection and analysis. The data set from Annual Poverty Indicators Survey 2011 was analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis. Selected families with 6-11 years old children whose mothers are working abroad were also interviewed to provide an understanding of the relevance of social resource within families in the children's school participation.

**INTRODUCTION**

Basic education is a human right and pivotal towards better participation in the cultural, political, industrial, and economic functions of a society. Having a high value to basic education, the Philippines has promulgated laws, institutional policies, and implemented programs to deliver free public education in primary and secondary levels. This ideal is fortified in the Education for All (EFA) Program and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which direct to the attainment of universal primary education. However, the checking mechanisms, such as education and poverty surveys, show that the country is still behind in achieving these aims. The gap between Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) and Net Enrolment Rate (NER) from 2007 to 2010 shows that there is a sizable number of over-aged enrollees in the primary school (Albert, Quimba, & Ramos, 2011a). The enrollment rate had also decreased in 1999–2006 (UNESCO, 2008). The Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS) revealed that early school leavers are increasing with 46% recorded drop-out in 2008—a total of 2.9 million out of school children (OOSC). In general, facts in basic education convey that school participation and school retention are still below the goal that all Filipinos will acquire basic competencies. Moreover, the

aim of eliminating gender disparity in basic education has not materialized yet. Out of school children have higher incidence among boys by 13.5% than among girls with 9.8% (APIS, 2008).

The children's school participation is the first step towards the process of formal socialization through the agency of school. By enrolling in basic education, a child exercises his/her human right and partakes in the active process of learning the basic skills necessary to become a functional member of the society. Moreover, cultural and political awareness are formally passed on to children once they get enrolled in school, which benefits the nation-state in general.

However, the private and social benefits of basic education cannot be completely realized if the children drop out from school. This leads us to the importance of children's school retention. School retention entails inclusion for all students; it requires equitable participation in and succession throughout the education ladder (Hoffman, 2001). Low school retention is a loss not only to the child who drops out but even to the family and state. Gichohi (2014) asserted that "the loss of students returning to campus for another year usually results in greater financial loss and lower promotion rate for the institution and might also affect the way stakeholders, legislators, parents and students view the institution" (p. 1). In order to reap the socio-economic benefits, the children must complete the cycle of basic education.

The factors influencing the school participation and school retention are worthy of investigation. Equally important is to understand various contexts that shape these factors, hence, a sociological lens is needed. The succeeding part is a review of literature, which presents relevant studies identifying various factors influencing participation and retention as well as related theoretical positions on the sociological dimension of the subject.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

The relevance of basic education and difficulties of achieving its universality have instigated many studies to determine and understand the factors that influence children's school participation and school retention. Surveying scholarly works provided various and some were overarching factors that encourage or hinder universal participation and retention to basic school. These factors can be categorized into spatial, demographic, health and nutrition, political, natural causes, and socio-cultural.

### **Factors Influencing the Children's School Participation and School Retention**

#### **A. Spatial factors**

Children's school participation and school retention between rural and urban areas vary as the accessibility to basic education is influenced by the location of the school. In the Philippines, rural areas, where school accessibility is an issue, have lower school participation

and higher OOSC (Albert et al., 2011a). Children have to walk very long distances in rugged roads and face spatial obstacles such as rocky mountain slopes, rivers, muddy fields, scorching heat of the sun in dry months, and flooding during rainy seasons. These spatial constraints, aggravated by the scarcity of primary schools in areas more accessible for far-flung communities, influence both the school participation and school retention in rural areas. According to IBON Foundation (2012), the shortage of school buildings and classrooms totaled 152,569 in 2011–2012. This shortage is more prevalent in rural areas where natural calamities are common and incomplete schools are located in sparsely populated areas—a problem significantly influencing the school retention. Incomplete schools in rural areas are distance away from the nearest complete school, which means students who run out of grade levels to take in their local school will have to travel far in the mountains by foot in order to continue education (David & Albert, 2012). This is similar to the explanation of low school retention pointing out that distance of schools as one of the reasons (Albert, Quimba, & Ramos, 2012). Likewise, Ghana has disparities in rural and urban school participation and retention, which are also influenced by the distance of communities to school (Fentiman, Hall, & Bundy, 1999). The lack of accommodation in the cities where junior secondary schools are located is a contributing factor in the low transition rate from primary to junior secondary level of children in rural Ghana. The lack of access and scarcity in rural areas are important reasons of lower school participation and school retention compared to urban areas. Urbanization, according to Tullao and Rivera (2009, p. 3), “improves access and proximity to schools by improving transportation and communication infrastructures.”

## **B. Demographic factors**

If spatial factor plays a role in the access of children to schools, the demographic characteristics of the children and their family are also significant factors that influence the basic education especially in terms of school participation and school retention. Studies by Stafford (1987), Knodel, Havanon & Sittitrai (1990), and Tullao and Rivera (2011) have common views in explaining as how the family size influence children’s school performance and school participation. Stafford (1987), who focused his study on family structure and resources, had determined the negative impact of large family size to children’s school performance. Knodel et al. (1990) revealed that children from small families were more likely to continue their education than children from larger families. On the other hand, Tullao and Rivera (2011) compared the urban and rural households in Pasay City and Eastern Samar in the Philippines and investigated how the household size and other factors influence the children’s school participation. They have concluded that household size is negatively significant in influencing school participation; hence, as the number of household increases, the participation rate to school decreases.

Aside from family or household size impacting on the school participation and school performance of children, many studies have found out that age is also a demographic factor that explains school participation and retention. Basic education in the Philippines is for children 6–15 years old. The NER is an important school participation indicator because it tells the number

of children of official primary school age who enrolled in primary education as a percentage of the total children of the official school age population (Millennium Development Goals Report, 2006). However, many studies reveal a phenomenon of over-aged children in basic education. In rural Ghana, there were many over-aged school children, which means that late enrollment is rampant and consequently leading to drop-out (Fentiman et al., 1999). Even in the Philippines, APIS (2008) and Albert et al. (2011) prove that about 3.9 million children age 7–15 who are in school are at least two years above the official age for their respective grade or year level. Based on the household survey of APIS and FLEMMS (2008), children were not in school even on their official age of Grade 1 level because parents or household heads think their children are too young to be in school. There was also a mistaken belief that the school age entry is seven.

Another demographic factor that influences school participation and school retention is gender. In the Philippines, participation in pre-primary education, which gives readiness to children in their elementary education, is lower for boys. Boys are also affected in gender disparity as determined by their participation in labor such as the case of 13.5% male OOSC who are related to child labor (APIS, 2008; Albert et al., 2011). On the other hand, Stafford (1987), who focused his analysis of age and gender within the family unit, has explained that sex and age range of siblings in the household influence the children's school participation. Gender roles of children in Kotido District, Uganda influence the school participation. Boys are responsible for taking care of the animals in their pastoral life; whereas, the girls are required to do domestic works (Namukwaya & Kibirige, 2014). In rural Ghana, continuing basic education for girls is harder than boys because of experiences of sexual harassment, early pregnancy that disrupts the schooling, and lack of female teachers to act as role models (Fentiman et al., 1999).

And lastly in demographic factor is migration. Aside from gender issues affecting the low participation of girls in basic education, girls in rural Ghana abandon their slim chance to basic schooling since they leave the communities as early as 10 years old. It can be concluded that the demographic factors vis-à-vis their impact to school participation and retention are defined in the socio-economic and cultural context of the countries cited in the studies.

### **C. Health and Nutrition**

Another factor encompassing the well-being and capacity of children to participate and progress in the education cycle is health and nutrition. Children in basic education are in the formative stage—mentally, socially, and physically. Healthy disposition is key in helping the children cope with the school, social, and physical demands of growing up. Yu and Hannum (2007) surveyed 2,000 9-12 years old children and their families in Gansu, China. Their study concluded that favorable household nutritional environment positively predicts the school performance of children in early primary grades. Health and nutrition factors are also found to be relevant influence in school participation and performance in Kenya (Sigman et al., 1989) and Philippines (Florencio, 1995). Thus, lacking or absence of it creates adverse effect on children's basic schooling, such as the case of children in Southern Malawi where hunger is one of the reasons of low school participation (Davison & Kanyuka, 1992). Same with the findings of

Tullao and Rivera (2009) that hunger has negative and statistically significant influence on school participation rate.

#### **D. Economic factors**

Apart from the spatial, demographic, and health and nutrition, another dimension well studied in relation to basic education are economic factors. Economic factors include family or parental income, cost of schooling, and parental job loss. Parental income, like other parental resources such as education and child-care time, is found to be associated with greater cognitive skills among children and it offsets the apparent disadvantage of having siblings in nearby age intervals (Stafford, 1987). Similarly, head's income among families in impact on children's well-being and educational development (Carlson & Magnuson, 2011). Meanwhile, in the Philippines where primary education is free, parental/family income does not significantly affect school participation (Tullao & Rivera, 2009). In the case of Mathioya District in Kenya, the school enrollment remarkably increased when free primary education was implemented (Wairimu, 2007).

Despite the social value of basic education and its aid to individual empowerment, financing basic education has varying "debatable" policies and practices across countries. In the Philippines, free primary and secondary education is mandated by law and that the modes of delivery should be able to cover even the disadvantaged and vulnerable population. Perhaps, it is too ideal that the reality of it is beyond our grasp. Cost of schooling is still one of the reasons for increased OOSC especially for families in urban areas, driving children to participate in child labor (Albert et al., 2011a). Even if the primary education is free, the opportunity cost of sending children to school plays a huge role in low school retention. School leavers are mostly children from low income families and had to do labor to contribute in family income (Department of Education, 2008-2009; Albert et al., 2012). In a village called Errabelly of Karimnager District of AndhraPradesh in India, low school retention is attributed also to opportunity cost where children withdraw from school after Grade 1 level to help their mothers in *beedi*, a local cigarette, manufacturing and to earn money for survival (Rena, 2007). Attending to crops amidst the problem of food insecurity at Kotido District in Uganda is one of the reasons why children leave school (Namukwaya & Kibirige, 2014). Fendiman et al. (1999) and Davison and Kanyuka (1992), who pointed out that lack of cash for school fees and uniforms force the girls to stop schooling, have the same viewpoints from their studies in rural Ghana and Southern Malawi respectively.

Being significantly associated with school participation, losing the income source may negatively influence the education of children in the family. Employment status of household head has positive impact on school participation (Tullao & Rivera, 2009). The closure of plants in Norway resulted to parental job loss. Rege, Telle, and Votruba (2011) explored the effects of parental job loss to the children's school performance based on their GPA. It was found out that paternal job loss decreases family income; yet, it was not the reason for the decline of children's school performance. The study showed that fathers who lost their jobs spend more money in

hospitalization and anti-depressant drugs while spending more time in home production. The exposure of children to mental distress of fathers upon losing their job contributed to the decline of the children's school performance.

### **E. Socio-cultural factors**

Reflecting on the abovementioned factors that are influential in the children's basic education, we can derive into the idea that educational outcomes are mostly determined by material resources and human capital. However, little attention is given to the dimension of social and cultural capital in explaining the children's participation and retention in school. The succeeding part suggests the indelible role of family and community in the children's learning process. The children's family and community processing within the certain socio-cultural constructs shape the pattern of school participation and school retention. Social capital highlights the impact of presence or absence of supportive social relationships and networks within and outside the family, which is indispensable for aspiring to and achieving success (Coleman, 1988). On the other hand, cultural capital posits that disadvantaged or vulnerable groups such as females, children from poor families, boys who assist in earning family income through child labor, children without role models, and prejudiced children are suffering in their education because they lack the cultural environment at home that would allow them to connect in school environment (Bourdieu, 1977; Farkas, Grobe, Sheehan, & Shuan, 1990).

Using these frameworks, factors related to the concept of social capital were contingently identified in the studies of Stafford (1987), Yu and Hannum (2007), Albert et al. (2011a), Fentiman et al. (1999), Davison and Kanyuka (1992), Rege et al. (2011), Rena (2007), Wairimu (2007), and Namukwaya and Kibirige (2014).

Mothers' education is one of the socio-cultural factors that significantly influence children's basic education (Stafford, 1987; Yu & Hannum, 2007). It is proven that mothers with higher education have fewer children, which creates a favorable condition for lessening sibling competition and allows more time for child-care (Stafford, 1987). Mothers' education is also given more relevance in children's upbringing than paternal education especially among less developed countries (Yu & Hannum, 2007). Study of Albert et al. (2012) on the profile of OOSC in the Philippines shows that school leavers are children whose mothers have little education.

Parental beliefs and attitudes also influence the children's school participation and school retention. Albert et al. (2011a) and Albert et al. (2012) expressed that parents' lack of interest and their perception that their children are being too young are also reasons for low school participation. Same with the studies of Fentiman et al. (1999) and Philippine Education For All 2015: Implementation and Challenges (2015), both added the lack of readiness for school as one of the reasons for low school participation. In Southern Malawi, girls face a huge obstacle in their basic education because of the parental attitudes of educating males over females (Davison & Kanyuka, 1992). Low school retention at Andhra Pradesh in India (Rena, 2007) and at Mathioya District in Kenya (Wairimu, 2007) is also influenced by indifference of parents towards education and lack of responsibility among parents. A study on the parental beliefs on

children's school performance of immigrant and non-immigrant parents was conducted by Okagaki and Sternberg (1993). The children's school performances were significantly shaped by certain beliefs of parents from different cultures. The immigrant parents from Cambodia, Mexico, and the Philippines emphasize conformity to external standards while Anglo-American and American born parents underscore autonomy.

Socio-cultural attitudes and practices also influence gender disparity and access to education. Davison and Kanyuka (1992) documented various experiences of school girls who face academic and attitudinal challenges in Southern Malawi such as stereotyping, teacher prejudice against female students, and girls' too many chores in their homes. In Andhra Pradesh, India girls have higher drop-out rate due to the following reasons: discrimination against girls, the need to earn money for girl's marriage, and high education hinders the girls of finding suitable groom (Rena, 2007). Low school participation in Uganda is also attributed to an attitude that girls having education become prostitutes (Namukwaya & Kibirige, 2014).

### **Synthesis: The Mother Role and Family Environment**

The mother's role in her children's basic education is depicted in succeeding studies. The nutritional environment of the children in their homes is determined by mothers who strategize household access to a variety of nutritious foods in the home (Yu & Hannum, 2007). This proves the role of mothers as household resource managers in many cultures. With changes in economy and market production, mothers became increasingly active in the market career too. This results in a shift in social roles within the family. However, this leads to a significant trade-off between a market career and home career for women (Stafford, 1987). Moreover, mothers' job loss has a positive effect on the children's school performance because of child-rearing activities (Rege et al., 2011).

Given the incidence of gendered migration, the role of a mother is a big compromise. This might have an effect on the school participation of children—a gap in research on education and changing family structure and dynamics due to displaced mother roles.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

This paper determines the factors such as demographic, economic, and sociological factors associated with the children's school participation. Specifically, it answers the following questions:

1. What are the children's school participation rate of households in different backgrounds such as household size, amount of cash received from domestic and/or abroad, highest grade completed of the household head, and presence of the mother in the family?
2. What are the determinants of school participation of children in elementary level?



## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study has the following objectives:

1. To determine the school participation of households categorized into different demographic, economic, and social characteristics;
2. To test if the demographic, economic, and social variables have significance to school participation; and
3. To test if the absence of a mother has an influence to school participation.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This paper is significant in presenting the socio-cultural capital and network in the family and community in the promotion of children's basic education. This entails an understanding of how the changing structure and dynamics of Filipino families influence the school participation of children; hence, providing an idea of the plight of motherless children or those children whose mothers were displaced due to labor migration. Furthermore, this paper gives a scenario of how the demographic, social, and economic factors are interrelated in influencing the issues of basic education.

This study may also inspire more research appreciating the impact of migration on school participation. Although it may not directly affect school participation, the produced changes—such as the absence of a mother or other family members and the acquisition of buffer resources through remittances—can be relevant factors that determine school participation. This paper is also significant to prompt policy making that will consider the children with displaced mother roles in the families as disadvantaged/vulnerable; consequently, create welfare programs that will strengthen the support and guidance to these children.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Data Source**

This paper utilized the quantitative data from Annual Poverty Indicators Survey (APIS) 2011 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2011). Demographic, social, and economic variables were selected and formed a total of 8,502 cases of male-headed households. To supplement the quantitative data, an in-depth interview was conducted with a grandmother and a child who was left behind by an OFW mother.

### **Definition of Terms**

$SPR_i$  is the school participation rate of the household  $i$ . This is measured by the number of children in the household with age ranging from 6 to 11 who are attending grade school divided

by the total number of children in the household with age ranging from 6 to 11 years old times 100.

*agehead<sub>i</sub>* is the age of the male household head.

*hsize<sub>i</sub>* is the household size.

*toexp<sub>i</sub>* is the total expenditure of the household.

*cashab<sub>i</sub>* is cash from abroad. This is the amount a family receives from external source such as labor migrant remittance.

*cashdom<sub>i</sub>* is cash from domestic. This is the amount a family receives from internal source of income.

*hghead<sub>i</sub>* is the highest grade completed of the male household head.

*presmo<sub>i</sub>* is the presence of mother. This is a dummy variable indicating whether the mother is present, which assumes the value of 1, or absent, which assumes the value of zero.

## **Data Analysis**

The quantitative data was analyzed using an SPSS software. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis were performed to identify which of the selected variables are significant and interrelated in influencing children's school participation.

On the other hand, the qualitative data from the in-depth interviews was analyzed by thematic coding.

The school participation rate of children 6–11 years old is determined from all male-headed households in the data set. Participation rate is the number of children 6–11 years old attending elementary level over the number of children 6–11 years old. The equation below shows the functional relationship of the variables influencing school participation rate:

$$SPR_i = f(\text{agehead}_i, \text{hsize}_i, \text{toexp}_i, \text{cashab}_i, \text{cashdom}_i, \text{hghead}_i, \text{presmo}_i)$$

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

A total of 8,502 male-headed household data from 2011 Annual Poverty Indicators Survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and linear regression. The first part is a presentation of school participation rate of male-headed households categorized into

different factors such as demographic, economic, and social. The second part is a presentation of the correlation analysis of participation rate vis-à-vis the demographic, economic, and social variables and linear regression model with respect to school participation as the dependent variable. The last part is the sociological discussion on the variable presence of mother as supported by the interview results.

The average school participation rate of households is 36.02%. Similar to other survey results, this is very low and way behind the goal of universal primary education. The reasons for not attending school vary from economic difficulties, familial obligations, and lack of personal interest. In the succeeding discussions, school participation rate will be identified as per the category of households.

This low school participation rate can also be explained by other studies. Note that 6–11 years old children attending elementary school are considered to be participating in school. But based on the studies in the Philippines, 6 years old is still too young and, due to socio-economic reasons, 7 years old is the usual age for children to go to Grade 1 level (Albert & Ramos, 2010; APIS, 2008).

### **School Participation Rate of Households**

The school participation rate is highest among the households with male heads age ranging from 36–50 years old as shown in Table 1. Although, households with male heads age ranging from 20 to 35 also have a relatively high school participation rate. This characteristic is related to the reproductive years of males since the number of children 6–11 years old in the household is a component of participation rate.

**Table 1**  
*School Participation Rate Based on Age of Male Household Head*

<b>Age</b>	<b>Participation Rate</b>
20–35	41.34%
36–50	45.75%
51–65	26.16%
66-above	18.88%

In terms of household size, the participation rate is relatively high on households having five members and above as shown in Table 2. The Philippines has a very young population. This can explain that big households are mostly composed of children.

**Table 2**  
*School Participation Rate Based on Household Size*

<b>Household Size</b>	<b>Participation Rate</b>
-----------------------	---------------------------

0–4	6.92%
5–9	38.72%
10–above	38.71%

On the other hand, Table 3 shows that households with bigger total expenditure have lower participation rate than for households with low expenditure. The mean total expenditure of households is Php90,402.06. Education cost is included in this factor; and as shown In Table 3, households with low total household expenditure have a better ability to send their children in elementary school. Although basic education is free among public schools, for families experiencing income shocks and increasing expenditure, children’s education is an opportunity cost. Children help to contribute to family income, which will augment the needs of the family (Albert, Quimba & Ramos, 2011b).

**Table 3**  
*School Participation Rate Based on Household's Total Expenditure*

<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Participation Rate</b>
0–50,000	44.27%
50,001–100,000	41.11%
100,001–above	32.85%

School participation rate is highest among households receiving cash from abroad ranging from Php100,001 to Php200,000. Cash from abroad and domestic are part of the household income. Thereby, it economically helps the households to send their children to school.

**Table 4**  
*School Participation Rate Based on Cash from Abroad Received by Household*

<b>Cash Abroad</b>	<b>Participation Rate</b>
0–100,000	32.11%
100,001–200,001	35.39%
200,001–above	25.00%

Similar to the previous category is the case of households receiving cash domestic where school participation rate is also the highest in the middle range.

**Table 5**  
*School Participation Rate Based on Cash from Domestic Source Received by Household*

<b>Cash Domestic</b>	<b>Participation Rate</b>
0–100,000	36.02%
100,001–200,001	37.50%

Interestingly is the school participation rate of households categorized according to the highest education completed by the male household head. The school participation rate is lowest among households whose highest grade completed is college level and above. This is shown in Table 6. This can be gleaned from postponement of family life while pursuing higher level of education; hence, lesser children on elementary level.

**Table 6**  
*School Participation Rate Based on Education Level of Household Head*

Education of Household Head (Male)	Participation Rate
0–3 (No grade to elementary graduate)	37.37%
4–5 (High school level and high school graduate)	37.18%
6–7 (College level and above)	31.21%

### Factors that Influence School Participation Rate

Table 7 shows the results of correlation analysis. It was found that the age of household head, household size, total household expenditure, cash abroad, cash domestic, highest education level of male household head, and presence of the mother are variables significant to the number of children attending elementary and school participation rate of children 6–11 years old.

**Table 7**  
*Correlation Analysis of Socio-Demographic and Economic Variables with the Number of Children Attending Elementary and School Participation Rate*

Variable	Number of child elementary attending	Participation Rate
Age of household head	-.228**	-.199**
Household size	.515**	.394**
Total household expenditure	-.061**	-.033**
Cash abroad	-.025*	-.023*
Cash domestic	.053**	.029**
Education of male household head	-.094**	-.042**
Presence of Mother	.149**	.158**

\*\*correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

\*correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

**Age of head of the household.** This variable is negatively and strongly significant to participation rate. The school participation rate declines as the male household head becomes older.

**Household size.** This variable is positively and strongly significant to participation rate. As the number of household members increase, school participation rate also increases. This can be observed on the participation rate of households having five members and above. This result is contrary to the studies of Tullao and Rivera (2011) where household size was found to have an inverse relationship with school participation. However, further analysis of the correlation, household size has a significant direct relationship to total household expenditure. This means that as the household size increases, total expenditure for basic necessities also increases. This manner, the school participation is negatively affected.

**Total household expenditure.** This economic variable is highly significant to school participation; however, the relationship is inverse. The increase in total household expenditure pulls down the school participation rate. This is true especially to the financially-constrained families whose spending is more determined by their demand for basic need such as food, clothing, and shelter before investing in education (Chevalier & Lanot, 2001). The average income from the household data is Php27,477.01, which is lower than the annual average income of families in the lowest socio-economic class.

**Cash abroad.** Another economic variable is the cash received by the household from abroad. This was found significant yet has negative correlation to school participation rate. Economically, being part of household income, it is helpful. The negative correlation can be explained by Tullao and Rivera (2008) who positing that remittances from OFWs are usually used to support higher education rather than primary education. Moreover, its negative correlation can also be explained not only by economic motivation but on the sociological dimension such as the decline on socio-cultural resource and network among families with greater cash from abroad. Due to the limitation of data, it cannot identify which of the household members provides this external financial resource. However, correlation analysis shows a strong and negative correlation between cash abroad and presence of mother. It is not conclusive, yet an interesting possibility that increasing cash from abroad means an escalation of household without mothers.

**Cash domestic.** Cash received by the household from domestic or internal source has positive correlation to school participation rate; notwithstanding the fact that the mean of cash domestic is lower compared to the mean of cash abroad based on household data from 2011 APIS.

**Highest grade completed of the male household head.** On the average, male household heads have high school level as the highest grade completed. In other studies, the educational

attainment of the mother strongly and positively affects the school participation and school performance of the children. But in this case, the male head's educational background was found to be highly correlated to school participation; however, the relationship is inverse. This means that as the educational attainment of male household heads are higher; the lower is the school participation of children. This shows that school participation is not only an economic function but also sociological. Highly educated male household heads have active market careers, which lessens the nurturing time spent to the family. Moreover, it is also cultural in the sense that father role is not deeply associated to children's nurturing and school guidance. This may explain why male household head's education is negatively significant to children's school participation. Besides, a number of studies have proven that it is the mother's education that strongly influences the children's basic education (Stafford, 1987; Yu & Hannum, 2007; Albert et al., 2012).

**Presence of mother.** The presence of mother is deemed relevant variable in this study. It was found that the presence of mother in a household has high and positive correlation to school participation rate of children 6–11 years old.

Table 8 shows the results of the linear regression model. The independent variables such as age of household head, household size, total household expenditure, cash domestic, and presence of mother show an impact to the school participation rate of children 6–11 years old as the dependent variable. However, the variables cash abroad and highest grade completed of the household head are found insignificant in the model. This result agrees with the cited literatures that the mother's education plays the significant factor in children school participation. Moreover, cash abroad does not directly impact to school participation rate since remittances are usually used to support higher education (Tullao & Rivera, 2008). The impact of the said demographic, economic, and social variables to the dependent variable is validated by 21.3% Adjusted R-Squared.

**Table 8**  
*Regression Analysis for Participation Rate as Dependent Variable*

Variable	Estimate	Significant
<b>Dependent Variable</b>		
Participation Rate	27.303	<.0001
<b>Independent Variable</b>		
Age of male household head	-.597	<.0001
Household size	7.986	<.0001
Total household expenditure	-4.089E-5	<.0001
Cash abroad	2.059E-5	.175
Presence of mother	2.783	.032

Education of male household head	.079	.776
Cash Domestic	.000	<.0001

**R-squared: 21.9%**

**Adjusted R-Squared: 21.3%**

### **Presence of Mother as Social Capital in Children’s Basic Education**

The presence of mother was revealed as a highly significant factor that influences the children’s school participation. There is higher participation rate among households with mothers; conversely, more drop-outs from households without mothers. This result highlights the sociological dimension of school participation as influenced by the available socio-cultural resource in the family—presence of mother. The presence or absence of mother in the family shapes the social environment of children in various ways. The mother role manages the household resource especially the family’s health and nutrition (Yu & Hannum, 2007). Mother’s education serves as a more important factor influencing the children’s upbringing than paternal education especially in less developed countries (Yu & Hannum, 2007). And most importantly is the child-care and nurturing ability of mothers as key in promoting a supportive and cultural environment that help the children aspire success and cope with the school environment. In fact, there is a significant trade-off between market career and a home career for women (Stafford, 1987). Salazar-Parreñas (2005) noted that the children of migrant mothers are more prone to feeling of abandonment rather than those children whose fathers left the country.

In a case of a family with an OFW mother whose daughter was left behind when eight months old, the grandmother took the displaced mother role for the child. The left behind child is now nine years old and studying in a private elementary school. In the interview, the grandmother revealed that the child does not seem to be bothered by the absence of her mother. The grandmother has been the one taking care of all the nurturing and guiding role for the granddaughter. This includes managing the remittances of her daughter for the needs of her granddaughter; attending to the child’s physical, health, and nutrition needs; guiding the child’s education; and nurturing. The mother abroad communicates with her left behind child almost every day through phone call or video chat. Meanwhile, the child performs at the top of her class and, according to her, she has many friends. The absence of mother, in this case, does not affect the child’s school participation. This can be attributed to the re-arranged structure and dynamics of the family; where the grandmother serves as the strong mother role to the child. However, no one can deny a shy and silent sadness from her face when she was asked about how she feels when her mother leaves her again after a month of vacation; and she replied, “*sobrang nalulungkot...umiiyak pa nga po ako kapag umaalis s’ya*” (Very sad...I cry hard every time she leaves). For the child, it is alright that her mother works abroad but she strongly wishes for her mother’s presence during her special days—recognition ceremonies and birthdays. When she was asked if she wants her mother to stop working abroad and stay home, she said no; and when



asked why, she replied, “*para po nabibili nila yung mga gusto ko*” (so I can buy the things I want).

The shifting of the role of the grandmother to become a full-time mother to a child left behind by an OFW mother is an important coping mechanism for a family in order to provide the socio-cultural resource needed by a child to support the school participation. Moreover, modern technology for communication has also improved the communication between OFW mothers and children they leave behind. On a study, “the mothers try to keep in touch by phone and e-mail, sometimes calling several times a week” (Salazar-Parreñas, 2002, p. 16). However, it can be noticed that expressions of motherly love and care, which are essential in the primary socialization of children, have been transformed into material and economic expressions such as sending children to private schools, paid arts lessons, gifts, and rare and short but grand vacations.

## CONCLUSION

The average school participation rate of the household data from 2011 APIS is still remarkably low. The correlation and linear regression analysis showed that factors such as demographic, which include age of household and household size; economic, which include total household expenditure, cash abroad, and cash domestic; and social, which include education of male household head and presence of mother are all significant and have strong influence to school participation rate of children 6–11 years old. Most importantly, it was found that mother role, either provided by the mother herself or a grandmother, is an important social capital in the family shaping a supportive environment especially for less capable or vulnerable children.

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