



## PARENTAL SOCIOECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFLUENCES ON ABSENCES AMONG INDIGENOUS PEOPLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEARNERS

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### ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study was to determine the influence of parental socioeconomic and demographic factors on school absences and dropouts among Indigenous Peoples (IP) elementary learners. Specifically, it described the parental profile in terms of age, family size, cultural obligations, and income level; measured the level of influence of these factors on school absences and dropouts; and tested for significant differences in influence when grouped according to the said characteristics. The respondents were 176 Grade 1 learners from Panganan, Digongan, and Kiulom Elementary Schools in Kitaotao District I together with their parents during SY 2024–2025. Total population sampling was employed. Data were gathered through a structured, expert-validated, and pilot-tested questionnaire. A descriptive-comparative design was used. Descriptive statistics summarized the parental profiles and the perceived influence levels. Inferential analysis tested group differences using One-Way ANOVA with post hoc procedures and independent samples t-tests, where appropriate. Results showed that parental age had a low overall influence; family size exerted a high influence; cultural obligations had a moderate influence; and income level showed a high influence on school absences and dropouts. Tests of significant difference further indicated that age, family size, and income level each produced statistically significant differences in influence; thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. It is essential to note that, despite constraints, most parents reported prioritizing schooling and encouraging regular attendance. However, financial limitations and larger household sizes posed substantial barriers, while cultural obligations moderately affected attendance without wholly disrupting

schooling. The findings underscore the need for targeted financial assistance, support mechanisms for large households, and culturally responsive school practices to improve attendance and minimize dropouts among IP learners.

**KEYWORDS:** Socioeconomic Factors, Demographic Factors, Indigenous Learners, School Absences, Dropouts.

## ***INTRODUCTION***

Education is a universally recognized right and a central driver of human development. However, many Indigenous Peoples (IP) elementary learners continue to face conditions that disrupt regular school participation. Persistent absenteeism in these communities is commonly associated with socioeconomic and demographic disadvantages, including unstable household income, limited parental education, and inadequate living environments. Cultural responsibilities and family obligations further shape learners' school attendance, often competing with formal education. Despite efforts to strengthen inclusive access, absenteeism among IP learners remains prevalent, indicating the need for deeper examination of the factors influencing their disengagement.

Patterns of absenteeism are frequently linked to overlapping constraints within the family structure. Children from economically challenged households may be expected to contribute to family needs, reducing their time and energy for schooling. Parents with limited educational backgrounds may also struggle to offer adequate academic guidance, indirectly affecting children's motivation and learning. In addition, remote home locations, large family size, and cultural obligations can disrupt attendance, particularly when learners must travel long distances or participate in practices scheduled during regular school hours. These cumulative pressures reproduce educational disadvantage and hinder learners' ability to complete primary education. Understanding how parental socioeconomic and demographic conditions influence school attendance is essential to designing appropriate interventions. Education is a key mechanism for addressing poverty and enhancing community development, making equitable access for IP learners a critical priority. Identifying the underlying causes of absenteeism can support the design of focused strategies aimed at strengthening retention, minimizing attendance gaps, and promoting a learning environment that supports the developmental needs of Indigenous children.

This study explores how specific parental characteristics—including age, family size, cultural

responsibilities, and income level shape absenteeism among IP elementary learners. It seeks to determine the central barriers to consistent attendance, examine the relationship between parental background and student retention, and recommend measures that may enhance participation. Outcomes of this inquiry are intended to inform policies and programs that advance fair and sustained educational opportunities for Indigenous learners.

### *Theoretical Framework*

The Ecological Systems Theory by Bronfenbrenner and the Theory of Social Reproduction by Bourdieu serve as the study's guiding theories. A thorough lens for examining the ways in which societal, familial, and personal factors influence school attendance trends is provided by these frameworks.

Multiple interacting systems impact children's behavior and development, according to Bronfenbrenner's hypothesis. The immediate environment, which includes classmates, school, and parents, directly affects attendance through expectations in the home, parental resources, and educational background. While access to educational opportunities is shaped by broader societal norms and cultural values, learner involvement is further conditioned by interactions among the home, school, and community.

According to Bourdieu's viewpoint, differential educational outcomes are a result of differences in cultural, social, and economic capital. Students from low-income families may lack the networks, academic assistance, and exposure necessary to meet the demands of school. These limitations increase the likelihood of inconsistent attendance and disinterest.

Parental age, family size, cultural responsibilities, and economic level are the independent variables in this study. The degree to which these parental characteristics affect IP elementary learners' absenteeism is the dependent variable. These components work together to give us a foundation for comprehending how home circumstances affect students' regular attendance at school.

### *Significance of the Study*

This study offers important insights into how parental socioeconomic and demographic conditions shape the school attendance of IP learners. Understanding these influences can help various stakeholders design more effective and culturally grounded approaches to strengthen school participation among Indigenous children.

For policy developers, the results may guide the creation of supportive programs that respond to the unique challenges faced by IP learners, including financial support, community-based interventions, and improved school resources.

For school leaders and teachers, the findings can deepen their understanding of attendance-related barriers. This knowledge may encourage more inclusive teaching approaches, initiatives for at-risk students, and stronger partnerships with families.

For parents, the study highlights the pivotal role they play in shaping their children's schooling experiences and may motivate them to seek available forms of assistance that can support their children's education.

For community organizations and NGOs, the study identifies areas where additional advocacy, outreach, and resource support could be beneficial, particularly in increasing parental involvement and improving educational access for IP communities.

For future scholars, this research adds to existing work on educational barriers in Indigenous settings and may serve as a starting point for further investigations into issues affecting marginalized learners.

### ***Definition of Terms***

To establish consistency in interpreting the variables, the following terms are defined as used in this research:

**Cultural Obligation.** Refers to traditional roles, responsibilities, or community practices within Indigenous groups that may affect a learner's ability to attend school regularly.

**Educational Attainment.** The highest educational level completed by parents, which may influence their expectations, attitudes, and involvement in their child's schooling.

**Family Size.** The total number of members living in a household, which may impact the distribution of time, finances, and parental attention.

**Income Level.** The economic status of the household, shaping the family's ability to provide school necessities such as supplies, transportation, and daily allowances.

**Parental Demographic Factors.** Characteristics of parents—including their age, number of household members, and cultural duties—that may influence the attendance patterns of IP learners.

**Parental Socioeconomic Factors.** Conditions related to a parent's financial resources and

social status, which affect their ability to support their child's educational needs.

**School Attendance.** The consistency with which a learner is present in school, serving as a key indicator of their engagement in and commitment to formal education.

### ***The Methodology***

This research adopted a combination of descriptive-comparative and correlational approaches to investigate how parents' socioeconomic and demographic factors influence the school attendance of Indigenous Peoples (IP) elementary students. The descriptive component focused on outlining the characteristics of parents, including their age, family size, cultural responsibilities, and income levels, to provide a clear profile of the participants and establish baseline data for the study.

The correlational element examined the connections between these parental factors and students' patterns of school attendance, aiming to determine the degree to which socioeconomic and demographic conditions are linked to absenteeism.

Finally, the comparative aspect assessed whether variations in parental characteristics, such as income or family size, result in significant differences in their impact on school attendance. This allowed the study to explore how different socioeconomic and demographic profiles may uniquely affect the consistency of students' participation in school.

### ***Research Locale***

This study was carried out in Kitaotao District 1, focusing on three Indigenous Peoples (IP) elementary schools: Panganan Elementary School, Digongan Elementary School, and Kiulom Elementary School. These schools are situated in Kitaotao, Bukidnon, a municipality in the southern Philippines with a substantial Indigenous population.

The research sites were selected because they have a high enrollment of IP learners, making them ideal for exploring how parental socioeconomic and demographic factors affect school attendance. The students in these schools often face socioeconomic difficulties, such as limited access to educational materials, financial challenges, and cultural responsibilities that can influence their regular participation in school.

By concentrating on these three schools, the study seeks to provide a detailed understanding of the obstacles to school attendance among IP learners in rural areas. The findings are expected to shed light on how local economic conditions, geographic factors, and cultural

practices shape educational participation, helping inform interventions designed to better support Indigenous students in their learning journey.

### ***Respondents of the Study***

The respondents of this study are the one hundred seventy-six (176) parents or guardians of Grade 1 learners in Kitaotao District 1 for the school year 2024–2025.

### ***Sampling Procedure***

For this study, all 176 Grade 1 students enrolled at Panganan, Digongan, and Kiulom Elementary Schools in Kitaotao District 1 for the 2024–2025 school year were included, along with their parents or guardians. Given the relatively small and well-defined population, a total population sampling approach was employed to provide a thorough understanding of how parental socioeconomic and demographic factors influence school attendance among Indigenous Peoples (IP) learners.

This method allows the study to capture the full diversity of parental characteristics, including age, family size, cultural responsibilities, and income level, ensuring a comprehensive and unbiased representation of the population. Engaging all eligible participants helps provide an accurate depiction of the relationship between parental factors and student school participation.

Data were collected through coordinated efforts with the schools, where parents or guardians were approached and provided consent prior to completing questionnaires or participating in interviews. This approach enabled the research to obtain detailed, firsthand information on parental backgrounds and their direct impact on students' attendance and retention.

### ***Research Instrument***

For this study, a structured survey questionnaire served as the main tool to collect quantitative information on parents' socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds and their impact on school attendance among Indigenous Peoples (IP) elementary learners. The questionnaire was carefully developed to accurately capture the study variables and allow for meaningful statistical analysis.

The first part of the survey focused on parents' profiles, including details such as age, family size, and income level. Questions were designed to provide clear, measurable data that could classify respondents' demographic and socioeconomic conditions effectively.

The second part explored how these parental factors influence children's school attendance. Respondents rated each factor using a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (No Influence) to 5 (Very High Influence), to quantify the extent of parental impact on student participation and retention.

To ensure the tool's accuracy and relevance, a panel of experts in education and Indigenous learning contexts reviewed the questionnaire. Their feedback helped refine the wording, remove ambiguities, and ensure cultural appropriateness. A pilot test with a small sample of participants similar to the target population was then conducted to check clarity, reliability, and the overall flow of the instrument.

The finalized questionnaire was administered to the parents of all 176 Grade 1 learners at Panganan Elementary School, Digongan Elementary School, and Kiulom Elementary School in Kitaotao District 1. This approach allowed the study to comprehensively examine the connection between parental socioeconomic and demographic factors and school attendance among IP learners.

### ***Validity of the Instrument***

For this study, the research instrument underwent a comprehensive validation process to ensure its precision, clarity, and suitability for capturing the variables under investigation. The questionnaire was carefully developed to reflect the study's objectives, examining parents' socioeconomic and demographic characteristics such as age, family size, and income and their influence on the school attendance of Indigenous Peoples (IP) elementary learners.

A group of experts with backgrounds in Indigenous education, including educators, researchers, and school administrators, thoroughly examined the tool to confirm its content validity. They evaluated each question to make sure it was pertinent, understandable, and consistent with the conceptual framework of the study. The panel's recommendations were used to improve the questionnaire's clarity, clear out any misunderstandings, and make sure it was respectful of Indigenous contexts and culturally appropriate.

Following that, a pilot research was conducted using a small sample of the intended audience. This step assisted in determining possible problems with understanding the questions, assessing the flow and structure of the questionnaire, and testing its dependability. After statistical analysis of the pilot data, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to verify internal

consistency and make sure the items accurately measured the desired constructs.

The final questionnaire was improved to precisely capture parents' socioeconomic and demographic profiles and their impact on IP students' school attendance through an iterative process of expert review, pilot testing, and statistical validation. The instrument's effectiveness and reliability are ensured by this meticulous validation process, which also provides dependable data to fully address the study's goals.

### ***Data Gathering Procedure***

The process of collecting data for this study was carefully structured to ensure both accuracy and completeness. The first step involved obtaining official permission from the principals of Panganan, Digongan, and Kiulom Elementary Schools in Kitaotao District 1. A formal letter was submitted, explaining the objectives of the research and requesting approval to survey the parents of 176 Grade 1 students. Once approval was granted, the researcher coordinated with teachers and school staff to organize the distribution of the questionnaires.

Before the survey was administered, parents were asked to provide informed consent. A short orientation was conducted to explain the purpose of the study, guarantee the confidentiality of responses, and clarify that participation was entirely voluntary. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first section gathered information on parental socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, such as age, family size, income, and cultural obligations; the second section assessed how these factors were perceived to influence the school attendance of their children.

The researcher personally facilitated the distribution and completion of the questionnaires, assisting parents when clarification was needed. For parents unable to complete the form immediately, additional time was provided, and support was offered to those with literacy challenges to ensure their answers accurately reflected their experiences and perspectives.

After collection, the questionnaires were carefully reviewed, and responses were encoded for data processing. Any inconsistencies or missing information were verified where possible to maintain data integrity. The finalized dataset was then subjected to statistical analysis to examine the influence of parental socioeconomic and demographic factors on the school attendance of Indigenous learners.

This systematic and hands-on approach ensured that the information gathered was both reliable and comprehensive, providing valuable insights into the factors affecting the participation of IP elementary students in Kitaotao District 1.

### ***Scoring Procedure***

The data collected from the questionnaires were converted into numerical values using a carefully structured scoring system, enabling precise evaluation of the study variables. This system was designed to correspond to the two main sections of the survey, employing both categorical coding and a Likert-scale format.

For the section detailing parents' socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, responses were organized into specific categories for clarity and ease of analysis. Key variables, including parental age, family size, and income level, were assigned numerical codes. For example, income was divided into clearly defined brackets such as 1 = Below Poverty Line, 2 = Low Income, 3 = Middle Income, 4 = High Income, and 5 = Very High Income. This coding allowed for straightforward comparisons across different socioeconomic groups.

In the portion of the survey assessing the influence of parental factors on school attendance, respondents indicated the degree of impact each factor had on their child's school participation using a Likert scale. This approach provided a standardized, quantifiable measure of parental influence, facilitating statistical analysis to determine the relationship between socioeconomic and demographic variables and Indigenous learners' school attendance.

### ***Findings***

The findings on parental socioeconomic and demographic factors revealed that parental age had a low overall influence on the school attendance of IP learners. While some parents acknowledged that being younger or older could provide advantages in supporting education and guiding children academically, the results indicated that age alone did not significantly affect learners' participation in school. By contrast, family size showed a high level of influence, as the number of children in the household directly affected parents' ability to provide for educational needs and divide attention among academic requirements. Despite these challenges, most parents still encouraged regular school attendance and prioritized school-related expenses, reflecting strong parental commitment to education even in larger households.

Cultural obligations, on the other hand, were found to have a moderate influence on learners' school attendance. Many parents expressed belief in the importance of completing education despite cultural responsibilities and actively sought to balance cultural participation with academic commitments. However, community values and traditions occasionally interfered with school attendance, though only to a limited extent, as parents consistently emphasized the priority of education alongside cultural practices. Income level was also revealed as a highly influential factor. Parents identified financial struggles particularly in providing school supplies and covering daily expenses as significant barriers to consistent attendance. Although some families benefitted from financial assistance, the support was often insufficient to fully sustain their children's educational needs, underscoring the decisive role of household income in shaping school participation.

Lastly, the test of significant differences revealed that parental age, family size, and income level all produced statistically significant effects on learners' school attendance. Among these, parental age emerged as the strongest influence, followed by income level and family size, showing that both demographic and economic characteristics meaningfully affect learners' participation in school. These findings highlight the necessity of addressing socioeconomic and demographic disparities through targeted interventions to ensure consistent educational access for IP elementary school learners.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The study finds that a number of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, including parental age, family size, cultural responsibilities, and income level, have a major impact on IP elementary school students' attendance at school. The test of significant differences revealed that parental age plays a meaningful role when grouped according to age categories, indicating that generational differences among parents affect how they support and prioritize their children's education, despite the fact that parental age only showed a low overall influence. Family size also had a significant impact because it was frequently difficult for bigger homes to divide resources and attention among their children. Notwithstanding these limitations, the majority of parents showed a strong commitment to school involvement by promoting attendance and giving school-related costs first priority. This indicates that family size influences engagement through both parental values and resource availability.

Students' attendance at school was found to be somewhat influenced by cultural duties. In spite of traditional obligations, parents typically stressed the value of finishing school, making a concerted effort to strike a balance between cultural engagement and academic obligations. This demonstrates that education and cultural identity do not always have to clash, but the significance of balancing formal education with traditional customs is highlighted by the sporadic intrusion of communal traditions. In contrast, one of the most powerful predictors of school attendance was financial level. Parents commonly cited financial hardships as obstacles to regular attendance, such as trouble paying for everyday expenses and supplying school materials. Although financial aid was helpful to some, it was not always enough, demonstrating that poverty is a major factor in IP learners' absenteeism.

The study's final conclusion is that socioeconomic and demographic factors significantly influence how often IP students attend school. Among these, the impacts of parental age, family size, and income level were statistically significant, highlighting their combined influence on educational access. It will be crucial to address these variables with focused interventions, such as financial aid, school subsidies, community-based support programs, and culturally sensitive educational regulations, in order to guarantee fair chances for Indigenous students and end the absenteeism cycle.

### ***Recommendations***

To enhance school attendance, and provide holistic support for IP elementary school learners, it is essential to address the influence of parental socioeconomic and demographic factors by focusing on age-related needs. Schools and community organizations should design parenting seminars and capacity-building programs tailored to both younger and older parents, equipping them with effective parenting strategies, academic guidance skills, and confidence in supporting their children's schoolwork. At the same time, intergenerational mentoring can be encouraged, where experienced parents share their knowledge with younger ones, thereby strengthening parental involvement and fostering a culture of shared responsibility for children's education.

To manage the challenges posed by family size, local governments and schools should provide targeted support programs for large households. This may include school subsidies for multiple-enrolled children, family-based scholarship opportunities, and community tutoring initiatives to ensure that children from larger families receive adequate academic support. Schools should also strengthen communication channels with parents, offering

flexible ways for families to engage despite competing responsibilities.

In terms of cultural obligations, educational institutions should integrate culturally responsive teaching strategies that recognize and respect Indigenous traditions while promoting regular school attendance. Schools can collaborate with community elders and cultural leaders to harmonize cultural practices with educational schedules, ensuring that students can participate in both without conflict. Organizing school-based cultural events can also foster a sense of identity and belonging while reinforcing the value of completing formal education.

Addressing the strong influence of income level requires policies and programs that reduce the financial burden of schooling. Educational stakeholders should expand scholarship opportunities, provide free or subsidized school supplies, and strengthen feeding programs to ease economic pressures on families. Partnerships with NGOs and government agencies can also establish livelihood projects for parents, creating sustainable income streams that indirectly support children's education.

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