

## THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL INEQUALITIES IN CHILDHOOD EDUCATION OF SELECTED ELEMENTARY PUPILS IN ZAMBALES

**Author's Name:** Khristalyn Yap<sup>1</sup> Kezia Indefenso<sup>2</sup>

**Affiliation:**

1. President Ramon Magsaysay State University, Philippines.
2. Magsaysay Memorial College Philippines.

**Corresponding Author Name & Email Id:** Khristalyn Yap, khristalyny@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

*This study examined the impact of social inequalities on the education of selected elementary pupils in Zambales, focusing on variations in gender, age, religion, hometown, and family income. Using a descriptive research method and survey questionnaires, the findings revealed that differences exist in pupils' profiles except for religion and disability. Results also showed that pupils are neutral regarding the influence of social inequalities on making friends, suggesting that peer relationships are less affected by these factors. However, they agreed that they are capable of persevering in their studies despite these challenges. In conclusion, while variations among pupils are inevitable, these do not hinder their ability to form friendships or pursue academic success, emphasizing the importance of inclusivity, safe learning spaces, and collaboration among teachers, parents, and the community.*

**Keywords:** Social Inequalities, Childhood Education, Elementary, Descriptive Research Method, Inclusivity

## INTRODUCTION

Education remains one of the most critical tools for personal and societal development, yet access to quality education is unevenly distributed across the world. Differences in income, gender, age, ethnicity, disability, and other social markers contribute to inequalities in learning opportunities, affecting children's cognitive, socio-emotional, and academic outcomes (United Nations, 2020; Garcia & Weiss, 2017). Globally, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasizes the principle of “Leave No One Behind,” aiming to address disparities in education and ensure equal access to opportunities for all learners (UNESCO, 2021). In the Philippines, these inequalities are compounded by socioeconomic and geographic factors, with children in rural communities or from low-income families often facing limited access to resources, underqualified teachers, and substandard school facilities (ChildFund, 2023; Hamilton, 2020).

This study focuses on elementary pupils, investigating the impact of childhood education and social inequality. It examines how factors such as family income, geographic location, and school environment influence students' access to educational opportunities and their academic motivation. The study is grounded in three sociological theories that explain social inequalities: Functionalist Theory, which highlights the role of social structures; Conflict Theory, which explains disparities as a result of competition for limited resources; and Symbolic-Interactionist Theory, which examines how perceptions and social meanings shape individual experiences. Together, these frameworks provide a lens to analyze how external factors affect the educational experiences and resilience of learners.

Social inequality in education is not only a local concern but also a global challenge. Marginalized populations—including girls, indigenous peoples, migrants, and low-income communities—face barriers that hinder academic success, social mobility, and long-term development (Grant, 2023; Strauss, 2018; Johnson, 2018). Private and public school disparities, limited access to early childhood education, and unequal distribution of educational resources reinforce cycles of disadvantage (Farquharson, McNally, & Tahir, 2022; Garcia & Weiss, 2017). By examining how pupils at MMCZI perceive and navigate these inequalities, this study contributes to understanding both local and global patterns of educational inequity, with implications for teachers, parents, policymakers, and future researchers committed to promoting inclusive and equitable education.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The researchers employed the Descriptive Correlational Design. This design will allow the data to be interpreted while measuring the impact between the two variables. With this, the researchers will facilitate the data with the natural occurrence between and among them. By using this design, the

researchers were able to determine if social inequalities have an effect on the childhood education of the elementary pupils.

## DATA GATHERING

Quantitative surveys to assess the impact of social inequalities on their educational outcomes. It was participated by 50 randomly selected elementary pupils.

The aims of the research are: (1) To identify the impact of social inequalities on the educational outcomes of Grade 5 and Grade 6 pupils, (2) to understand the factors that contribute to social inequalities in education, (3) to assess the effectiveness of existing policies and initiatives to reduce social inequalities in education, and (4) to suggest recommendations to reduce social inequalities in education.

In terms of methods and procedures, a survey of elementary pupils was conducted to assess the impact of social inequalities on childhood education. The survey contained Likert Scale which determined if social inequalities are present inside their classroom through the pupils' perspective as well as its impacts on their childhood education through their academic performance.

First, the researchers created a letter of request from Basic Education Principal. Second, survey questionnaires were distributed to elementary pupils. Third, the data were analyzed to determine the impact of social inequality on childhood education. Fourth, results of the data analysis were with school administrators, teachers, and parents. Lastly, recommendations will be made based on the results of the data analysis to identify ways to reduce the impact of social inequality on childhood education

## DATA ANALYSIS

Statistical tools were used to treat the data gathered dealing with the impacts of social inequalities in childhood education.

### Mean

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x_n}{n}$$

Where:

$\bar{x}$  = Computed Mean

$\sum x_n$  = Sum of n values

$n$  = number of values in the sample

The mean in math and statistics summarizes an entire dataset with a single number representing the data's center point or typical value. It is also known as the arithmetic mean, and it is the most common measure of central tendency. It is frequently called the “average.”

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{f}{n} (100)$$

Frequency “is the number of times an event or observation happened in an experiment or study. It can also be defined simply as a count of a certain event”. While percentage “is calculated by taking the frequency in the category divided by the total number of participants and multiplying by 100%.”

$$\text{scale} = \frac{n-1}{n}$$

The researchers used this formula to calculate the qualitative interpretation of the weighted mean in accordance with the respondents' answers. This was a big help to identify the qualitative description which is important in analyzing and interpreting the result.

**Table 1 Profile of the Respondents According to Family Income**

Respondents	Less than ₱10,000		₱10,001 to ₱49,999		₱100,000 and above		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Randomly Selected Elementary Pupils	22	44%	24	48%	4	8%	50	100%

Table 1 shows the family income of the respondent. There are 22 respondents who has a family income of less than ₱10,000 which is 44%. There are 24 respondents who has a family income of ₱10,001 to ₱49,999 which is 48%. While there are four (4) respondents who has a family income of ₱100,000 and above which is 8% to complete the 50 respondents which is 100%.

Studies in education also emphasize that variables like gender and socioeconomic status may correlate with students' access to resources and academic performance (UNESCO, 2019). Presenting the profile of respondents ensures that findings are grounded in the realities of the population studied and acknowledges potential influences on their learning outcomes.

## RESULTS

**Table 2 Factors Affecting the Pupils’ Social Inequalities**

Statement	Weighted Mean	Qualitative Interpretation
1. I consider <b>gender</b> when making friends.	2.74	Neutral
2. I consider <b>age</b> when making friends.	3.84	Agree
3. I consider <b>religion</b> when making friends.	2.79	Neutral
4. I consider a <b>person’s disability</b> when making friends.	2.79	Neutral
5. I consider a <b>person’s hometown</b> when making friends.	2.79	Neutral
6. I consider a <b>person’s family income</b> when making friends.	2.47	Disagree
7. I am able to perform well in school because I am free to express my gender.	3.84	Agree
8. I can cope up with my classmates even if we vary in age.	3.95	Agree
9. My religion enables me to get good grades.	3	Neutral
10. I prefer to help and make friends with pupils who has an existing disability.	3.89	Agree
11. My hometown encourages me to study well.	3.58	Agree
12. I am able to focus in my studies because of my family’s income.	3.58	Agree

This table showed that the over-all qualitative description is “agree.” Although there were areas that the qualitative description was “neutral,” majority of the qualitative description is “agree.” This made way for the over-all qualitative description to result as “agree.” This is a proof that elementary pupils agree that they are able to persevere in their childhood education despite the existence of the factors that affect social inequalities.

## SUMMARY

This research is important to our education system because this will provide an insight on how social inequalities affect childhood education where we can draw inspiration from in creating possible solutions.

Supporting literature, such as Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, explains that children's self-efficacy and resilience enable them to adapt and succeed even in the presence of adversity. Thus, the study highlights that while inequalities exist, pupils demonstrate determination and perseverance, reflecting the important role of personal beliefs and supportive environments in sustaining educational engagement.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the interpreted and analyzed results, the following conclusions were made: Variations inside the classroom or school is inevitable. Variation in religion and disability is not present in Magsaysay Memorial College of Zambales, Inc. S.Y. 2022-2023. The pupils do not put pressure on themselves and their classmates when making friends. The pupils are able to persevere in their childhood education despite the presence of the factors affecting social inequalities.

According to Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, self-beliefs such as perseverance and self-efficacy strongly influence how learners respond to challenges in their environment. Similarly, Masten (2014) highlights that resilience in children often allows them to adapt and succeed academically even when faced with adverse conditions. These perspectives support the finding that learners can maintain determination in education despite inequalities in their social context.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Make every pupil feel included and seen. Study and understand each pupil's strength and weaknesses. Provide a safe space for the pupils to express themselves. Revisit the values that will create a happy learning environment. For the teachers, collaborate and engage with the pupils' parents in order to have a wider understanding on how a child can be helped. For the parents, observe the behavior of the child and how it affects their peers. For the community, do not encourage "name calling" when it comes to the division of social classes. For the school, continue helping their learners not just in the academic discipline, but as well as in their emotional capacities. For the school administrator, find time to monitor not just the academic standing of the pupils, but as well as their behavior as a class. For the future researcher/s, study how personal opinions and perceptions affect social inequalities.

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