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English class fifth graders: A description

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a baseline description of fifth graders in a regular English class located in an urban school. This study described the three regular English fifth-grader classes in three School Years of a public elementary school. There were 121 pupils profiled with data on their ages, gender, nutritional status and English final grades. Multiple regression analysis was used to correlate the academic grades in English with the ages, gender and nutritional status of the pupils under study. Percentages, frequency, mean and standard error were computed to describe the results. Results showed that almost similar number of boys and girls were enrolled each year. Majority of the pupils are in their expected grade level and have normal nutritional status. Gender was found to have a significant relationship with English final grades of the pupils. This finding implies that pupil activities and teacher facilitation must incorporate the gender-specific design of activities to better facilitate learning in both language and reading.

Keywords: Education, Pupils, Academic performance, Gender, English learning.

1. BACKGROUND

Language and Mathematics are basically considered in the study of grade schoolers' academic achievements. Accomplishment in English are generally determined through reading and language activities. Reading comprehension, for instance, has been regularly monitored by teachers and reported to management. The identification of slow readers and the change of pupils from slow to better readers are readily noted among the intentions of most, if not all, English teachers.

Factors that shape the learning environment of pupils include its physical plant. In the case of Dapitan City, the public school is the dominant provider of basic education. An average class size in the elementary level is 40 but sometimes squeezes in five (5) more pupils to respond to parents practically begging teacher-advisers to accommodate their children.

Sometimes, the public schools receive donations like tables and chairs from the Local Government Units. The community through the Parents and Teachers Association remains a constant partner of schools in physical improvements and financing a few major activities. Recent initiatives of teachers extend to engage alumni, friends and close acquaintances of teachers from abroad. The latter help described may be rooted in the contributors' understanding of the limited maintenance and other operating expenses that public elementary schools receive.

The analytical framework of Sangeeta Goyal's World Bank study (2007) provides a strong basis (general, not just English) on the determinants of learning achievements in primary education. The author describes learning achievement as a function of individual and family characteristics, schooling resources, school type (private or public), and gender, social group of the pupil and rural-urban location of the school.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature provides unlimited factors affecting the learning achievements of pupils in general. Grades of pupils are common predictors used and are explained through variables like socioeconomic factors, school-related factors, and additional educational inputs. Others would classify these factors as variables inside and outside of the school. These factors are termed pupil factors, family factors, school factors and peer factors (Crosnoe, Johnson and Elder 2004).

The study of Nyipir (2006) included parents' education among other home-based factors to explain pupils' performance. As considered in the study, this factor showed that pupils not performing well in school could be explained by the parents' education

level. The same result was also stated in the study of Farooq, Chaudhry, Shafiq and Berhanu (2011) with parents' education having a significant effect on the overall academic achievement of tenth graders. Factors related to socioeconomic status were also found affecting achievement of the pupils, especially in Mathematics and English. The same study also revealed that girls in the class had better academic performance compared to the boys assessed.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) What is the profile description of pupils in the three school years studied based on gender, age, and nutritional status?
- 2) What is the academic performance of fifth-grade pupils in English from School Year 2013-2014 to School Year 2015-2016
- 3) What are the factors affecting the fifth graders' academic performance and their final grades in English?
- 4) What recommendations can be made based on the study?

4. SCOPE AND LIMITATION

In the utmost intention of the author to understand fifth graders in the public school, this research is conducted. The author, being an English subject teacher, chose her own English classes to be the subjects of the study. Records on hand are the sole basis of the categorical variables used, thus this limitation of the depth of the study. However, this is the initial study conducted in the school among fifth graders and among pupils in their English subjects. All the English classes under study were limited to the same English subject teacher within different School Years. The similarity of class activities was considered in understanding the academic performance of the pupils.

A range of variables needs to be considered in understanding the grades of pupils in their English subject. Identifying the most contributing variables requires funds and training especially for teachers who are beginners in research but have the interest and the willingness to understand the depth and width of one's own pupils' learning. Pupils in the central and public school in Dapitan City are observed to be so diverse in character and attitudes to learning, thus the conduct of this initial study.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

a. Sampling

Random sampling was used among the regular English classes in the fifth grades. One section was selected each SY for three SYs considered. Table 1 below shows the distribution of pupils in each class of the SY.

Table 1 Distribution of Pupils in an English Class, SY 2013-2014 to SY 2015-2016

Year	No. of Pupils
2013-2014	40
2014-2015	42
2015-2016	39

b. Data Collection

Data mining was used to gather the English grades, gender, age and nutritional status of pupils. Records of the same English teacher were among the sources of the data. These records were accessible through the English teacher concerned.

6. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Profile

Gender

The same magnitude of the percentage change in gender is indicated in the population of pupils for the first SY under study (Table1). A 3% increase among girls and the same decline among boys' population was observed from 2013/14 to 2014/15. Likewise, during SY 2015/16, the percentage change in the population of pupils based in gender is 7%. SY 2015/16 has the lowest class size for the three SYs compared.

The results are reflective of the Zamboanga Peninsula population with an equal proportion of males and females (NSO, 2015). The youngest population of region 9 (0-14 years old) registered 38% of the total population and ranked second among adults and elders compared.

Table 2 Distribution of Pupils by Gender, SY 2013-2014 to SY 2015-2016

Gender	2013-2014		2014-2015		2015-2016	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Boys	22	55	22	52	23	59
Girls	18	45	20	48	16	41
Total	40	100	42	100	39	100

Age

Among age categories of the pupils under study, more than half of each class in each SY were 11 years old. This is the expected age of a grade 5 pupil. A proportion of early schoolers, those who entered first grade at 6 years old, were also observed among classes for the past three SYs. Thirty-five percent (35%) in the class of 2013/14 is the highest proportion of early schoolers.

Late schoolers registered more than 10% of the total class size in all three SYs. The pupils that comprise the 10% were supposedly in their sixth grade or already in high school. Reasons for late schooling were financial problems in two of the pupils; one other pupil could financially afford but was engrossed in computer games. Information was based on actual interviews upon enrollment. These were reported as balik-aral in the Learner Information System. Younger pupils call the older girls Ate in class (a Filipino tradition of respect bestowed upon elders).

Age of pupils was reflective of their views. Older girls would narrate based on life experiences such as dropping out or family break-ups while most girls describe day-to-day scenarios like weather conditions and academic achievements. This is observable during group activities as a test on speaking competencies. In all instances, elder pupils assume leader roles in these group dynamics.

Table 3 Distribution of Pupils by Age, SY 2013-2014 to SY 2015-2016

Age	2013-2014		2014-2015		2015-2016	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
10	14	35	14	33	11	28
11	21	53	22	52	24	62
12	4	10	4	10	3	8
13		0	2	5		0
14	1	3		0		0
15		0		0	1	3
Total	40	100	42	100	39	100

Nutritional Status

The Body Mass Indices (BMI) of pupils were calculated twice every SY. The first is sometime in the month of July, that is, nutrition month. The second is sometime in March. Changes in their BMIs were also reported and submitted to the Edukasyong Pangkabuhayan at Pantahanan (EPP) teacher in each year level. The BMI is posted in each class room labeled School Nutritional Status record. Each adviser is mandated to post twice each year. There are five categories to describe pupils' nutritional status.

Although more than 80% of each class size studied had adequate nutrition as indicated by their weight, the remaining 20% were described as either overweight, obese or wasted. The proportion of overweight pupils declined for the observed SYs. Actual records show that most of those overweight are girls. On the other hand, the proportion of those wasted rose for the last two SYs considered.

Department of Education Memorandum Order No. 37, s. 2014 was issued for a Funded School-Based Feeding Program of the Department of Education and the Department of Social Welfare and Development. Nutritional status of children affects performance in school directly resulting in dropouts or absenteeism as extensively provided in the literature (Pollitt 1990; Taras 2005). Absenteeism will result in poor academic standing. In the case of pupils under study, absenteeism may not be observable among those described as wasted but the latter participated less frequently than those with normal nutritional status.

Table 4 Distribution of Pupils by Nutritional Status, SY 2013-2014 to SY 2015-2016

Nutritional Status	2013-2014		2014-2015		2015-2016	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Normal	33	83	38	90	34	87
Overweight	5	13	4	10	3	8
Obese	1	3		0		0
Wasted	1	3		0	2	5
Severely Wasted		0		0		0
Total	40	100	42	100	39	100

English Grade of Pupils

English grades of pupils on the average leaped to 88% in the third SY from an average of 83% during the initial two SYs studied. Similarly, the maximum English grade obtained by pupils continued to increase for the three SYs. The minimum grade also rose to 76% from 75% in the last two SYs.

Table 5 Descriptive Statistics of Pupils, SY 2013-2014 to SY 2015-2016

SY	Population	Mean	SE	Max	Min
2013-2014	40	83	5.16	93	75
2014-2015	42	83	5.77	95	75
2015-2016	39	88	5.58	97	76

Gender is highly significant based on 1% level of significance. The contribution of gender towards English grades of pupils is 30% based on R squared value or the coefficient of determination. Thus, gender is significant to explain grades of pupils.

A constant value of 1.921 is the log-transformed grade in English which when transformed back to the actual grade is equal to 84.4% regardless of gender. In this aspect, the English teacher's inputs seemed to be one of the reasons that pupils will, on the average, obtain a grade of almost 85 regardless of gender. In this case, the grade in English is the measure of the pupils' learning; then, it could be inferred that further teacher inputs will entail better learning of the pupils. Pupils' self-esteem and interest in the subject must also be considered. Age and nutritional status do not explain English grades of pupils.

Table 6 SY 2013-2014 to SY 2015-2016

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Significance
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	1.921	.033		57.697	.000
Gender	.031	.005	.511	6.428	.000*
Age	-.003	.003	-.093	-1.185	.238
Nutritional Status	-.006	.007	-.064	-.804	.423

Dependent Variable: Final grade in English subject

*Significant at 1% level of significance

7. DISSEMINATION AND ADVOCACY PLAN

Participation in research fora or conferences hosted by institutions and organizations endorsed by the Department of Education or Commission on Higher Education with themes pertaining to education is encouraged.

Table 7 Advocacy Plan

Goal	Strategy	Next Steps	Who can help	What can help
Work with other subject teacher advocates on gender emphasis in the teaching strategies and teacher facilitation to be adopted.	Meet with fellow English teachers to start the school a design of strategies and facilitation that is gender specific.	Present for feedback the preliminary design of teaching strategy or facilitation for students through a demonstration.	English Supervisor to seat with the research specialist, school principal.	Divisions of City Schools in Dapitan City.

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