

## **The Academic Resilience of School Achievers Left-Behind Adolescents**

**Karen V. Rendeza**

*(College of Education, Bulacan State University, Philippines)*

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**Abstract:** This paper investigated the academic resilience of left-behind adolescents who perform well in school. Using the Phenomenological type of Qualitative research, the data were gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews with students who are thirteen to fifteen years of age, whose parents (either mother or father or both parents are working away from home), and whose grades are ninety and above the present School Year 2019-2020. Academic Resilience refers to the ability of the individual to effectively deal with difficulties, stress or pressure in the academic setting. Studies show that students with high academic resilience skills experience low academic burnout. Thus, they are the ones who survive and succeed in any academic race in their lifetime. Findings of the present study reveal that even away from their biological parents, the role of their surrogate parents or their caretakers at home is very vital in the achievements of academic goals of the left-behind adolescents. Different protective factors from the family, such as family guidance, family support, and opportunities for meaningful family involvement explicitly foster academic resilience especially among students at risk. Good study habits like having time to study at home, accomplishing and submitting all school requirements on time, and choosing good peers who inspire them to do group study also reinforces academic resilience. Lastly, values like prayerfulness, humility, feeling loved and confident are ingredients for being academic resilient.

**Key Words:** Academic Resilience, Students, Left-behind, Adolescents, School Achievers

The author's current Qualitative study focuses more on Academic Resilience. It is a deeper understanding on the student life of the left-behind adolescents, an offshoot of her research Rendeza, K. V. (2017). *Hearts Apart: The Impact of Parental Migration on the Life of Left-behind Filipino Adolescents*. *People: International Journal of Social Sciences*, 3 (3).

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Date of Submission: 10-06-2020

Date of Acceptance: 28-06-2020

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Parents working abroad to support their family members with their material needs is common in countries abroad and in the Philippines. The 2018 Survey on Overseas Filipinos revealed that there is an estimated total of 2.3 million Filipinos working abroad, 55.8% of which are females with about half of them (47.5 %) belonging to the age group of 25 to 34 years old. (psa.gov.ph) Some of these female Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) are for sure parents. The research finding of Dreby & Stutz (2011) says that mother's migrations affect the educational goals of their children in varied ways depending on whether they migrate alone or with their husbands.

The results of the study conducted by Robilla (2012) revealed that the more pressured the children are economically and materially speaking, the lesser is their tendency to achieve academically because of lower mental or psychological functioning, and lesser life satisfaction.

Working abroad is one solution many parents think of to provide for the physiological needs of their children. However, having parents working abroad may reduce parental care for their left-behind children (Lu et al, 2015). While some existing researches discuss about difficulties of left-behind students staying in school and finish their studies, this study has ventured the researcher's curiosity that not all left-behind students tend to belong to the roll of dropouts. They could excel academically instead.

A study conducted in Romania revealed a significant positive effect of parental migration on children's school performance as reflected in their high grades (Botezat & Pfeiffer, 2019). Likewise, findings in the study of Rendeza (2017) conducted in the Philippines revealed that success in school could be achieved regardless of the kind of care giver/s (either mother only or father only or grandparents or relatives only) to take care of them at home.

We cannot deny the positive effect of parental migration that it brings not just to the family of OFWs but to our country itself which is the increase in income due to remittances (Orguk, 2017). In April to September 2018 alone, the total remittance sent by OFWs reached an estimated amount of 235.9 billion pesos (psa.gov.ph).

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Consequently, having enough material resources to use for their studies reinforces academic achievement (Rendeza, 2017). Children of unmarried migrant mothers are motivated to excel more in their academics because they invest in their mothers' migrations as a sacrifice. (Dreby& Stutz, 2011)

Thus, the present study would like to investigate academic resilience among the left-behind adolescents. This aims to inspire the left-behind adolescents to perform better in school and go away from being a school drop-out.

## **II. MATERIAL AND METHODS**

This study investigated the academic resilience among left-behind adolescents who are performing very satisfactorily in school. Specifically, the following questions were answered:

1. What is the life situation at home of the academically achieving left-behind adolescents?
2. What is the economic situation of the family of the research participants before and when their parent/s are already working abroad?
3. What study habits do the academically achieving left-behind adolescents have?
4. What resiliency characteristics do the participants employ in order for them to achieve academically?

### **Research Design**

This study utilized the Phenomenological type of Qualitative Research. Phenomenology is used to identify phenomena and it focuses on subjective experiences and understanding the structure of those lived experiences. In this study, it is used to describe, in-depth, the common characteristics of the phenomena of the academic achievers left-behind adolescents. Its primary data collection method is through in-depth interviews. (statisticssolutions.com)

### **Sampling Method and Research Participants**

The researcher used purposive sampling. The research participants were chosen according to the following criteria: age ranging from thirteen to nineteen years old, a left-behind child of OFW parent/s, academically excelling with General Weighted Average of ninety and above, with signed Informed Consent by the Parent/s or Guardian.

The following is the Profile of the actual research participants in their Code Name:

1. **Rose** – a 13-year old female student whose Mom has been working in Doha and Hongkong for 7 years already. She is an only child; and her father is unknown to her.
2. **Belle** – a 14-year old female student whose both parents have been working abroad. Her Mom has been in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for 10 years. She has an 11-year old male sibling. Their father is a seaman and unknown to them since birth but recently they met them for 2 weeks that he was in the Philippines.
3. **Daisy** – a 14-year old female student whose Dad has been in the United States of America for 2 months already. She is an only child.
4. **Khel** – a 15-year old male student whose Dad has been in Dubai for 8 years. He has one male older sibling. Their parents are separated. Dad has another family.
5. **Arthur** – a 15-year old male student whose Dad has been in Saudi Arabia for 8 years and his Mom is already deceased due to illness. He has one female younger sibling.
6. **Tulips** – a 15-year old female student whose Mom has been working in Saudi Arabia and her Dad is working in Laguna, Philippines. She is the youngest among the 3 children of their parents.
7. **Cathy** – a 15-year old female student whose Mom is in Singapore for 2 years already. She is an only child. Her parents are separated.

### **Research Instrument**

An Interview Schedule was used to gather data through an in-depth semi-structured interview.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Data were gathered from research participants who have signed Informed Consent prior to the conduct of the interview. Confidentiality was observed all throughout the conduct of the study. Code names were assigned to each of the research participants to maintain confidentiality of their real identity.

### **Data Analysis**

Content analysis was used to analyze the data gathered from the interviews. Content Analysis is measuring the frequency of different categories and themes. It is possible in content analysis with caution as a proxy for significance. (MojtabaVaismoradi, HanneleTurunen, and TereseBondas, 2013)

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### **Economic Prosperity as a Positive Effect of Parental Migration**

Consistent with the findings of the present study, working abroad has a positive effect not just to the economy of the family of the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) but also to the economy of the country. The increase in income due to remittances by OFWs is a big help in the Philippine economy (Orguk,2017). Data from Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) revealed that in April to September 2018 alone, the total remittance sent by OFWs reached an estimated amount of 235.9 billion pesos (psa.gov.ph). Consequently, having enough material resources to use for their studies reinforces academic achievement (Rendeza, 2017). This is likewise noted in the present study:

**Tulips:** Pag dating posang financial nabibigaypo noon pero mas naibibigayngayon at nasusuportahannapo kami nangmabuti.

(Financially speaking, we are provided with our needs before but much better now.)

**Cathy:** Mas madamipoakongpanggastos, sapatpoyungbaonko. May sobra pa pominsan. Nakakagala pa poakokasimay sobra pa poakongnatatabi.

(I have more money to spend now, enough for my everyday allowance in school. That's why I still have some amount for my relaxation, going where I want, and I can still save some amount of money given to me.)

Further, the findings of the study of Machica, Jr. & Montallana (2018) in Samar, Philippines revealed that the experiences of overseas contract workers' children included financial security. This is also depicted in the present study:

**Daisy:** Ngayonpo mas guminhawapoangbuhaynamin. Kasiponabilina naming angmgapangangailangan naming saeskwelahankasi may maayosnatrabahosi Papa.

(We are enjoying now a better life because we are capable already of buying what we need especially my needs in school. This is because Papa has a better work now which gives him better income.)

**Arthur:** Para pong mas gumaanyungbuhaynamin. Kapagnanditoposiya, mas maliitpoyungsahodnanakukuhaniya. Tapos, kamingtatlopa poyunginaasikasoniya. Peroponungumalisnasiya, Mama konalangpoyung nag-aasikasosaamin. Si Papa po nag papadalapongpera. Masnapadalipo.

(It seems that our life became lighter. When our father was still here working, he earns very little. Then he was also taking care of the 3 of us. But when he went to work abroad, our life became better, with Mama taking care of us at home.)

The results of the study of Galvez, K.C. (2017) as her Master's Thesis conducted in Visayas found out that most respondents were young, married professionals, earn 30,001 to 70,000 pesos, follow a monthly budget plan, save 10,000 or less pesos monthly, don't have any multiple loans nor credit cards, spend more on basic necessities, covered with insurance, own several properties, manage business and don't have any will. In addition, factors moderately influence the financial decision to invest for education. The study concluded that remittances, OFWs' main income, are influenced by other factors, which are crucial factors to consider on investments for education.

#### **The Economic Situation of OFW Families**

In Mindanao, a study conducted by Avelino et al (2009) showed that most of the OFWs come from poor families. Indeed, it is poverty that drove them to work abroad and most of those who are lured abroad for 'better life' are the heads of the families leaving their wives alone to take care of the children. They never gave up despite hardships in the process of applying for the job. In effect, they are able to provide financial support and to alleviate the economic condition of their families.

In her study, Rendeza (2017) found out that having majority of her research respondents agreed that their family income improved when their parents started working abroad. The above findings are parallel to the results of the present study. Since the currency of other countries are usually higher in value than the Philippine peso, working abroad at times makes the Filipino workers earn and live better.

Interviewer: Sapalagaymo o sapagkakaintindimo, bakitpumuntang abroad si Mommy/Daddy?

(As far as you know or understand it, what made your mom/dad work abroad?)

Responses:

**Rose:** Para makabayadposautang at makapagsimulapo ng negosyo.  
(To be able to pay debts, and to start a business.)

**Daisy:** Saunaponalulungkotako, peronungmakalipasangilaraw, naintindihankonarinpo, para posakinabukasannamin.  
(At first, I felt lonely, but after few days, I was able to understand that my parent needs to work abroad to be able to provide for my needs and to prepare for a better life in the future.)

**Khel:** Anopo, dahilposakanyatinataguyodnyapo kami, tapos para pomaibigayang mgapangangailangannamin. Peropoyung nag-ibangbansaposisiyadoonponawalaang relationship namintsakang mama kopoulosakanya.  
(It's because he said he needed to work abroad to be able to provide for our family's needs. However, when he was already abroad, his relationship with us and my mom was lost.)

**Arthur:** Kapagnanditoposiyayung pang pinansiyal naming kulangnakulangpomahirappokasiditomaghanapngtrabaho. Tsakamaraminarinpokamingpangangailangan. Palakinanangpalakikamingmagkakapatid.  
(If my dad is with us, our family economy suffers. It is difficult to find job here in our country. Also, our family's needs are increasing as we (my siblings and I) grow so he needs to work abroad to earn better to be able to support our family.)

**Tulips:** Para pomasmabigaypoangmgapangangailangan naming magkakapatidsakangpamilyaponamin.  
(To be able to provide for our family's needs...)

**Cathy:** Para posa education kopo... para makapag-college. Kasipo di po afford paghindiposiyang nag-abroad.  
(To support my education especially when I pursue tertiary education. We cannot afford pursuing my Bachelor's degree if my mom won't work abroad.)

Marital problems also affect the family economy as revealed in the present study:

**Belle:** Di dinpo, kasipo may ibangpamilyapokasiyung Daddy konakailangan din poniyangsuportahan.  
(My dad has another family to support aside from us so still we do not live a better life even if dad is working abroad.)

#### **Caretakers at Home in the Absence of the Parent/s**

Nancy E. Hill and Diana F. Tyson (2009) underscored parental involvement during middle school as positively related to achievement. Among the important types of involvement include parental involvement that creates an understanding about the purposes, goals, and meaning of academic performance; communicates expectations about involvement; and provides strategies that students can effectively use like academic socialization that has the strongest positive relation with achievement.

When the Father or Mother or both Parents are working abroad, who is left in their home with their children? The present study once again affirms that part of the culture of Filipinos wherein grandparents do take care of their grandchildren at home so that parents could go for work and earn a living for the family. If not grandparents, it is the aunts and uncles of the left-behind children who take care of them. To those whose father is the OFW, it is the mother who takes care of the children.

Rojas (2015) found out in his study that it is possible to identify and describe different protective factors from the family, such as family guidance, family support, and opportunities for family members to get involved with life's journey of one another, hence reinforcing academic resilience especially among students at risk. Also, looking into the possibility of addressing how the characteristics of the individuals foster positive outcomes which include being positive thinker, persevering, or motivating.

#### **Communication and Technology plays a Vital Role in Keeping Relationships**

It was found out by Machica, Jr. & Montallana (2018) that social media have a significant contribution in sustaining the family relationship especially between the parent-migrants and their left-behind children. This is also evident in the present study:

Interviewer: *Ilangbesekayong nag-uusapng Mommy mosaisanglinggo?*

*(How often do you talk with your Mom in a week?)*

Responses

**Rose:** Anopo, once a week po. KasiLinggolangoang day off nya.

I: *So anoyun, Video Call?*

**Rose:**Opo.(Once a week through video call.)

**Belle:** Araw-arawpo.

I: *Ano yon? Through, text ba o nagvi-video call kayo? Nagvi-video call kayo araw-araw?*

I: *Ilang minute saisangaraw?*

**Belle:** Minsanpo, tumatagalpong 30 minutes, peropopinaka-mahabapo ay isangoras.  
(Half an hour to one hour everyday through video call.)

**Tulips:** Halos araw-araw din po, nagvivideo call po kami.  
(Almost everyday through video call)

### **The Costs of Parental Migration**

The present study also shows that marital problems brought about by long distance relationship of husbands and wives have negative economic implications. Having another family to support does not improve the living condition of the family members in the first and second families of the OFW. Sad to note, broken relationships and broken homes are just some of the costs of Parental Migration. This sad reality is a true-to-life story of Rose, Belle, Khel and Cathy in the present study:

Interviewer (I): ..... *Yung father mo?*

**Rose:**Di kopokilala.

I: *4 years old ka. Si daddy naman?*

(My mom started to work abroad since I was 4 years old, and I did not have the chance to know my father eversince.)

**Belle:**Di kopoalamkasipo, simulapopagkapanganaksa akin di konaposiyanakita.  
(I do not know my father because I have not seen him since birth.)

**Khel:**Anopo, dahilposabinyaitataguyodnyapo kami. Tapos para pomabigayangmgapangangailangannamin. Peropoyungnasaibangbansanaposiya, doonponawalaang relationship naming tsakang mama kopoulosakanya.... Hiwalayposila.

(The reason for working abroad is for my dad to be able to support well our family economy. However, when he was already abroad, his relationship with us (including Mom) was broken.)

**Cathy:**DitolangposaPilipinas....Hiwalayposilani Mommy.  
(My Dad is just here in the Philippines....He is separated with my Mom.)

In congruence with the findings of the current study, Haour-Knipe and Aggleton (2010) in Filippa, O.M. (2013) found out that long distance relationship with a spouse could lead to extra-marital relations which may likewise expose the marital pair to health risks such as HIV/AIDS.

### **The Left-behind Adolescents and Their Academic Performance**

Machica, Jr. and Montallana (2018) in their study found out that feelings of desertion and isolation, affected academic performance, unhappiness, and worry among the left-behind students. On the other hand, the study of Dreby& Stutz (2011) revealed that children of unmarried migrant mothers are motivated to excel more in their academics because they invest in their mothers' migration as a sacrifice. This is consistent with the success stories of the left-behind adolescents in this study despite the various, diverse life's battles that they are into. Talking about their study habits, these are what they do: (1) having study time at home, (2) reading or studying lessons in advance to be able to participate actively in class discussions, (3) accomplishing and submitting school requirements on time, (4) having extra-curricular activities to further maximize their God-given talents, and (5) keeping in mind always the rules and regulations of the school.

Interviewer: *Saiyongpag-aaral, anu-anoangginagawamo para ma-maintain ang 90 and above nagrade?*

Responses

**Rose:** Anopo, pagkauwiposabahay, nag-aaralpoako.  
(I do study at home.)

**Belle:** Nag-a-advance reading poako, tapos di kopo, di kopokinakalimutanyung mga assignment.  
(I do advance reading and I don't forget to do and submit my assignments.)

**Daisy:** Satulongpongpag-a-advance reading kopo, at tamangorasngpagsa-submit ng mga requirements at mgapagsalisamga performance.....Sumasagotsamgatanongng teacher.  
(I do advance reading, join performances in contests, and recite in class.)

**Khel:** Anopo, tutokpoakosa kung anopoang hobby ko. Ayunponasa Special Program poako, yung hobby kopoano Musician poako. Doonponagigingtutokpoako. Advance poakosa instrument, sa modern instrument po at sa modern music. Tapospona-i-a-apply kopoitosapag-aaralkopo. Nakakasabaynamanpoakodahilpo may idea namanpoakonaano, nag-a-advance reading poako.  
(I do focus on my passion in Music. My hobbies inspire me to do better in school.)

**Arthur:** Nagbabasalangpoakokapag may pinapabasalangpoyung teacher. Hindi namanpoakoganunkasipag mag-aral. Pagdatingposamga quiz, mas nadadaliannapoako. Madalipokasiakomakakuhangmga lesson ng mga teacher kapagdini-discuss peropagbinabasapo mas nahihirapanpoako.  
(I read at home if we have assignments. I am not that studious, but I find our quizzes just easy. I prefer lessons that are being discussed in class; not the ones that are being read.)

**Tulips:** Hindi kopohinahayaan kung sakalingmahulimagpasang requirements sa school. Uma-attend poakosamga remedial classes nabinibigayng teachers during excused absences namin. Kasipo may mga contest pokamingsinasalihan, representing our school.  
(I always make sure that I submit all school requirements. I attend remedial classes in lieu of our excused absences because we are representing the school in many contests.)

**Cathy:** Anopo, siyemrepreoginagampanankopoangtungkulinkosa school, ginagawakopoyungmga project kotapospokapag may kailangangipasapinapasakosaoraspo para pomataaspoayungmakuhako, nagri-recite poako para posa recitation, mgaganungbagaypo.  
(Of course, I am responsible of my duties as a student. I comply and submit all school requirements on time, and I recite during class discussions.)

### **Academic Resilience and the Left-behind Adolescents**

Banatao (2011) defined **resilience** as the dynamic process whereby individuals exhibit positive behavioral adaptations despite significant adversity or trauma. Challenges may include a combination of emotional, physical, or social stressors.

Further, Academic Resilience refers to the ability to effectively deal with setback, stress or pressure in the academic setting. (<https://www.aare.edu.au>) Students with high academic resilience skills experience low academic burnout. (Oyoo, Mwaura&Kinai, 2018; Kamalpour et al,2017)

In this study, the research participants displayed academic resilience through (1) Understanding and taking their parents' going abroad to earn a living to support them as an inspiration to do better in school are ways to be brave enough to hurdle difficulties with schoolworks. (2) Following the teachings of their elders, being with good friends helps the left-behinds deal with their life situation wisely. Having influenced by classmates who are studious makes the left-behind also perform better in school. (3) Supportive family members and friends are the protective factors of the left-behinds in being academically resilient. (4) A goal-driven life of the left-behind inspires them to work harder and make their dreams come true no matter what. (5) Parents do inspire their children to do better in school. And (6) Values like prayerfulness, humility, and being loving together with a trait such as self-confident are ingredients for being academic resilient.

**Rose:**Gawinponatinyung best natin para pomaging successful kasipoginawarinngmgamagulangnatinyung best nila para pomaiahontayosakahirapan; para pomakapagtapostayosapag-aaral.

(Let us do our best to succeed because our parents are also doing their best for us...to send us to school and give us a better life.)

**Belle:** Anopo, gawinponilanginspirasyonyungmgamagulangponilanapinilinglumayo para langpomatugunanangpangangailangannila.  
(Make our parents our inspiration because they chose to work abroad to be able to provide for our needs.)

**Daisy:** Yung anopo, yungkailanganpomagingalertosalahatkasi di lahatngtaomapagkakatiwalaan... Piliinangaibigang may mabutingimpluwensya.  
(We need to be vigilant. Not everybody could be trusted.... Choose friends who have good influence.)

**Khel:** Pangarapkoposapamilyakopomakataposakongpag-aaral, dahilpoayunlangpo, dahilisapoyunsaipagmamalakisa akin ngpamilyako, at makakapagpatayona kami ngsarili naming bahay.  
(I dream to finish my studies because education is one among those my family is proud of...Then we will be able to build our own house.....)

**Arthur:** Yung pagkawalaponiya (Mom ko) ay ginawako pong inspirasyonkasipohindikorinpoalam kung matutuwasiyasamgaachivementsko.  
(I made the death of my mom an inspiration to do better in school...just not sure if she's happy with my achievements....)

**Tulips:** Mag-pray polagi, mahalinpotalagayungmagulangtsakamaniwalaposasarilikahitnapo may mgataongpilitnanagbabasaiyotsakapopagang motto ko at ang motto posa room naming sabikopo 'angnapapakumbabasiyapoangitinataas,' yunpo!  
(Pray always. Love our parents...believe in yourself even if others do not believe in you. As what our class motto says "the humble is the one being raised up...")

**Cathy:** Anopo, angginagawapongmgamagulangnatinay para din posaatin. Huwag din pomasamain. Iniwanponilatayodito. Anopo, umaalisposilakasi para din namanyunsaamin. Ginagawaponilayun para sa future namin. Kaya po para samganagri-rebeldepokasipo nag-abroad yungmagulangnila, hindiponilanakakasama, anopointindihinnalangponanagsa-sacrifice poyungmagulangnila para posa future nila.  
(The efforts of our parents are for our welfare. We don't take it against them. We understand them instead, that they have to sacrifice working abroad to give us a better life in the future.)

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the interviews with the left-behind adolescents who are academically achievers, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Working abroad brings economic prosperity to the family and to the country.
2. Economic prosperity is correlated with enough materials to use in accomplishing school requirements that is essential in getting high grades.
3. Taking into consideration of the Filipino culture, the left-behind children of the OFW parent/s are usually taken cared of at home by their grandparents, and/or aunt and uncle, or their older siblings.
4. While Economic Prosperity is the positive effect, there are also the negative effects of Parental Migration such broken relationships and broken homes which put the left-behind children in high risks again in financial concerns and in value formation while they are growing.
5. The study habits of the academic achievers left-behind adolescents include having study time at home, reading in advance to be able to participate actively in class discussions, accomplishing and submitting school requirements on time, and following the rules and regulations of the school.
6. Academic resilience could be achieved through different protective factors from the family, such as family guidance, family support, and opportunities for meaningful family involvement that explicitly foster it.

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Karen V. Rendeza. "The Academic Resilience of School Achievers Left-Behind Adolescents." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 25(6), 2020, pp. 58-66.