
Children of Incarcerated Parents: Stories of Survival and Resilience

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ABSTRACT

Children are silent casualties of parental incarceration. The increasing number of incarcerated parents in the Philippines is reflected in the overcrowded prison cells. This paper tries to document struggles and evidence of resilience of children whose parent/s are incarcerated. The study used two sets of survey questionnaires, one for the teachers and one for the child participants. It also used interviews to gather the qualitative data of the study. Proper protocols were followed to obtain consent from respondents and participants. The data reveal that

incarceration disrupts family structures, distorts family dynamics, causes financial instability, and poses survival challenges. Interestingly, respondents in this study manifested resilience as shown in their effort to find means to survive and continue schooling. Positive behaviors were more prevalent than the negative ones, by a wide margin. Older children seem to perform more satisfactorily in school over the younger ones who need help academically. It is recommended that children of incarcerated parents be given priority in social services by the government. Non-government organizations and educational institutions can consider creating extension programs to support this vulnerable sector of society.

Keywords: Academic performance; Positive and negative behavior; Parental incarceration; Survival; Resilience;

1. Introduction

Parental incarceration represents a significant and inequitable adversity that increases the risk of adjustment problems among children and adolescents, as highlighted by Johnson and Arditti (2023). Children often suffer in silence when their parents are incarcerated. Their lives can be profoundly disrupted, leading to emotional, psychological, and social challenges. They also face stigmatization, financial instability, and a lack of support, all of which can impact their well-being and development. Unfortunately, their struggles often go unnoticed and unaddressed by society. What used to be a rare experience has become a nearly common happening among children at present. In the US, estimates suggest that around 8 percent of American children will ever have their father imprisoned (Wildeman and Andersen 2015). In the Philippines, there is a dearth of literature on the number of children with incarcerated parents. However, data on the

rising number of parental incarceration in the Philippines is evident in overcrowded prison cells. Figures from the Philippine Bureau of Jail Management and Penology reveal an average of 370% congestion rate nationwide as of September 30, 2022. Reuters reported in 2017 that according to the London – based Institute for Criminal Policy Research, the Philippines is third in the most congested prison system in the world after Haiti and El Salvador. This overcrowding suggests a growing number of children with an incarcerated parent—whether a father, a mother, or both. Such circumstances can severely impact families, not only financially but also socially, leading to conditions that are prejudicial and detrimental to children’s development. Moreover, the Philippine judiciary has long struggled with court congestion, with a high volume of pending cases and severe delays in case disposition, depriving citizens of swift and fair justice (Orbeta, Paqueo and Siddiqui, 2021).

Incarceration can put a family in dire financial difficulty especially when it is the earner who gets imprisoned. It may

lead to children lacking support in basic and educational needs. Parental incarceration can even alter household and relationship dynamics quite dramatically (Turney, 2019). It may result in severed relationships among husbands and wives, and children may have to deal with the consequences of the separation, even to the extent of change in living arrangements. Often, children stay with their mothers when the father is incarcerated or the other way around. But in some cases, some children have to move to relatives, or worse, to a social welfare and development center when both parents are incarcerated, or when the other parent cannot support the children.

The stigma, strain and separation as a result of paternal incarceration may have an impact on children (Fostand Hagan, 2015). This can possibly lead to psychological and behavioral problems. These problems may interfere with the youth's adjustment at home and school, and ultimately compromise their academic performance and school outcomes, (Shlafer, Reedy and Davis, 2017). Research shows that parental incarceration

negatively affects children's educational outcomes and opportunities. (Turney, 2019). In addition, the study of Wildeman, et.al, (2017) reveal that the stigma of paternal incarceration shapes teachers' expectations of students, leading to a 10% to 40% increase in teachers' expectations of children's behavioral problems. Further, parental incarceration is significantly associated with students' poor school-based outcomes (Shlafer, Reedy and Davis, 2017), leading to more behavioral and mental health problems (Hardy, 2018), and higher levels of delinquency, criminal activity, and criminal justice contact (Porter and King 2014). Moreover, having a father or a mother being imprisoned can also be stigmatizing to children. This may cause isolation and shame, impeding social interaction with teachers and peers, further missing educational opportunities and leading to poor outcomes (Turney, 2019). The statistics can go further but more important than the numbers are the untold and undocumented stories of how children go through their experience daily, given one or both parents are incarcerated. This adversity disrupts family dynamics

and can lead to negative outcomes, but it also provides a context for understanding resilience. Research has shown variability among children with incarcerated parents, challenging the deficit perspective that views these children and families through a lens of inevitable dysfunction. Instead, resilience-focused studies, such as those by Miller et al. (2022), emphasize the importance of sensitive, responsive caregiving and supportive relationships with teachers and other adults. These relationships can foster positive adjustment and mitigate the adverse effects of parental incarceration. Bowlby's attachment theory (1973) supports this by underscoring the critical role of secure attachments in a child's emotional and social development. The presence of stable, supportive figures can thus act as a buffer against the stressors associated with having an incarcerated parent.

Resilience is viewed as a dynamic process involving interactions with one's environment, according to the Resilience Research Center. Miller et al. (2022) emphasize that these bidirectional interactions continuously impact

access to support and resources. This perspective suggests that resilience involves both the ability to navigate to necessary resources and negotiate for them in culturally meaningful ways. Sensitive caregiving and supportive educational environments highlight the crucial role of social-ecological contexts in resilience. Thus, understanding resilience in children with incarcerated parents requires considering their broader social and environmental contexts and the quality of supportive relationships, allowing them to adapt positively despite adversity.

Given the scant foreign and local studies that document struggles and coping stories of children having a parent in prison, this case study hopes to present one. This paper hopes to present how these children manifest resilience and hope in their day to day life. Additionally, it is of interest to explore how the child participants perform and behave in school as described by teachers in respective public schools. Ultimately, from the findings of this case study, the researcher hopes to instigate programs and

community extension services that may be helpful to alleviate situations of children with incarcerated parents.

2. Literature Review

This literature review explores resilience among children of incarcerated parents, synthesizing key studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of how parental incarceration affects child adversity, behavior, education, and resiliency.

Parental Incarceration on Children

Parental incarceration is a significant issue that impacts a wide array of child outcomes, including mental health, emotional well-being, behavioral adjustment, and academic performance. It has greatly impacted children in different ways. According to Turney (2019), the incarceration of a parent can disrupt family structures significantly. Children of incarcerated fathers often remain with their

mothers, while children of incarcerated mothers frequently live with extended family or are placed in the foster care system. In the United States alone, parental incarceration is a widespread issue affecting an estimated 2.7 million children, equivalent to 1 in 28 children under 18 years of age. This is a potent stressor that can lead to long-term consequences for children's health and well-being. Children in these situations are at a higher risk of experiencing psychological distress, behavioral problems, and social stigmatization. The absence of a parent due to incarceration can also disrupt attachment processes and stability in the child's life, leading to increased anxiety and depression (Turney, 2019). Similarly, Davis and Shlafer (2017) explored the mental health of adolescents with currently and formerly incarcerated parents. Their study found that these adolescents exhibit higher levels of depression, anxiety, and behavioral problems.

The study also highlighted that the stigma associated with parental incarceration exacerbates these mental health

issues, calling for more comprehensive mental health support systems.

Further, incarceration has been shown to increase divorce rates significantly. Lind (2014) noted that incarceration during marriage is strongly correlated with higher rates of divorce. However, if a spouse was incarcerated before marriage, the likelihood of divorce does not increase, suggesting that the disruption caused by the absence of a spouse during incarceration is a critical factor leading to marital breakdown. Hardy (2018) provided a qualitative analysis of the effects of parental incarceration on family members, focusing on mothers, fathers, marriage, children, and socioeconomic status. The study found that parental incarceration leads to increased risk of divorce, mental health issues in children, and a decline in socioeconomic status. It also noted that while academic performance might not always be directly affected, the overall family dynamics and parent-child relationships suffer significantly.

On the one hand, Jackson et al. (2021) utilized a strategic comparison approach to investigate the link between parental incarceration, child adversity, and child health. Their study highlights the multifaceted nature of adversities faced by children with incarcerated parents. By employing a robust methodological framework, the researchers were able to isolate the effects of parental incarceration from other confounding variables. Children of incarcerated parents experience significantly higher levels of adversity compared to their peers. These adversities include economic hardship, social stigma, and disrupted family dynamics. The study found a direct correlation between parental incarceration and poor health outcomes in children. These include higher rates of physical health issues and mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression. Also, Bradshaw, Creaven, and Muldoon (2021) conducted a longitudinal cohort study on the emotional and behavioral outcomes of children with incarcerated parents.

The study found that parental incarceration at age 9 is associated with increased difficulties and reduced prosocial behavior at age 13. The study identified primary caregiver depression and the quality of the caregiver-child relationship as mediating factors, suggesting that interventions should focus on supporting caregivers to improve outcomes for children. Further, Herreros-Fraile et al. (2023) conducted a developmental systematic review to examine the broader impacts of parental incarceration on children's development and well-being. Their study provides a holistic overview of the developmental challenges faced by these children. The impact of parental incarceration varies across different developmental stages. Early childhood exposure is associated with attachment issues and developmental delays, while adolescence is marked by increased risk of delinquency and mental health problems. The quality of relationships with caregivers is crucial in buffering the adverse effects of parental incarceration. Supportive and stable caregiver relationships can significantly enhance

children's resilience and coping mechanisms. Gifford et al. (2019) examined the association between parental incarceration and psychiatric and functional outcomes in young adults. Results of their study found that young adults with a history of parental incarceration are more likely to experience psychiatric disorders, substance abuse, and functional impairments compared to their peers without such history.

In terms of educational outcomes, Nichols, Loper, and Meyer (2015) explored the impact of parental incarceration on educational resilience among youth. Their research examined how school characteristics and connectedness influence school outcomes for these children. A strong sense of connectedness to school was found to be a critical factor in promoting educational resiliency. Children who felt supported by their teachers and peers exhibited better academic performance and engagement. Schools with supportive environments, including access to counseling and extracurricular activities, played a pivotal role in

mitigating the negative effects of parental incarceration on educational outcomes.

Despite the adverse effects of parental incarceration, emerging evidence of positive outcomes is possible. Cassidy, Giles, and McLaughlin (2014) provided evidence that child caregivers can experience positive effects or benefits from their caregiving roles, in addition to the well-documented negative outcomes. The study emphasized that young caregivers might find benefit in their roles when the demands are not excessively high and when their caregiving role is socially acknowledged and supported. The study by Cassidy et al. (2014) highlighted that young caregivers who receive social recognition for their caregiving efforts are more likely to experience benefit finding. These benefits can include increased maturity, enhanced empathy, and a stronger sense of responsibility. The recognition and support from social networks play a crucial role in mitigating the adverse effects and promoting resilience among child caregivers. The relationship between siblings is also very important. Sidhu (2019) underscored the

importance of healthy sibling relationships in the development of children and teenagers. Sibling relationships can promote empathy, pro-social behavior, and academic achievement. Healthy sibling bonds serve as a significant source of emotional support, especially in adverse situations such as parental incarceration. Healthy sibling relationships provide a buffer against the stress and trauma associated with parental incarceration. Sidhu (2019) found that siblings can offer emotional support, help each other cope with the challenges, and engage in pro-social behaviors that benefit both siblings. These positive interactions contribute to better psychological outcomes and promote resilience.

On Resilience and Parental Incarceration

Southwick et al. (2014) discussed resilience definitions, theory, and challenges from an interdisciplinary perspective. Their article highlighted the complexity of resilience, defining it as healthy, adaptive functioning over time in the face of adversity. The panel emphasized the

need for a multi-level analysis, including genetic, developmental, and socio-cultural factors, to understand and enhance resilience. Johnson and Arditti (2023) reviewed factors contributing to positive adjustment in children of incarcerated parents. They identified child-level factors such as resilience, ethnic identity, and a resilience mindset, as well as family-level factors like sensitive caregiving and family connectedness. School and community-level factors, including school connectedness and supportive relationships with teachers and other adults, were also highlighted. The review emphasized the importance of comprehensive intervention programs tailored for children with incarcerated parents, including parenting programs, reentry services, and school-based resources. Kjellstrand et al. (2019) used growth mixture modeling to study internalizing problems, like anxiety and depression, in youth aged 10 to 16. They found that over half of the children who experienced parental incarceration fell into a low-risk category, meaning, they had fewer internalizing problems over time. However, children with incarcerated parents

were less likely to be in this low-risk group and more likely to be in groups with higher levels of internalizing problems. This suggests that these children face significant early risk factors and are more likely to have negative psychological outcomes. This also implies that they face increased risk for developing internalizing problems, necessitating targeted interventions and support.

Luther (2015), on the one hand, explored how social support contributes to the resilience of adult children of incarcerated parents. Through in-depth qualitative interviews with 32 college students, the study found that support from caring adults, including caregivers, incarcerated parents, grandparents, older siblings, teachers, and coaches, facilitated success despite parental criminality and incarceration. Social support promoted resilience by providing access to conventional activities, supporting a vision of a better life, and encouraging turning points. Further, Luthar and Eisenberg (2017) reviewed resilient adaptation among at-risk children in *Child Development*, highlighting mechanisms such as supportive relationships,

cognitive flexibility, and a sense of purpose as critical to fostering resilience.

Parental Incarceration and Intervention programs

Merhi, Demou, and Niedzwiedz (2024) conducted a systematic review of mental health and behavioral interventions for children and adolescents with incarcerated parents. Published in the *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, this review highlighted effective interventions that include therapeutic programs, peer support groups, and family therapy. The review emphasizes the importance of early intervention and tailored support to address the unique needs of these children. A 2023 study published in *The Chronicle of Evidence-Based Mentoring* explored the voices of children of incarcerated parents and their implications for policy and practice. This qualitative study underscored the importance of listening to children's experiences to inform policies that support their well-being. It further recommended integrating mentorship programs

and improving communication between incarcerated parents and their children.

Parental incarceration poses significant challenges to children's development and well-being. However, the studies reviewed demonstrate that with the right support systems in place, these children can develop resilience and achieve positive outcomes. Future research should continue to explore innovative strategies to support this vulnerable population, ensuring that they have the resources and opportunities needed to thrive. The integration of findings from these studies highlights a complex interplay between the adverse effects of parental incarceration and the potential for positive outcomes such as benefit finding and resilience. While parental incarceration poses significant challenges, supportive sibling relationships and the recognition of caregiving roles can provide critical support to children. These factors can foster resilience and mitigate some of the negative impacts of parental incarceration.

Resilience is increasingly understood as a complex, dynamic process involving the interaction between individuals and their environments. This literature review explores the theoretical and empirical underpinnings of resilience, particularly among children of incarcerated parents, through the lens of several key studies. These studies examine various factors influencing resilience, including social support, caregiving, and the broader social-ecological context.

Materials and Methods

This study borrows the resilience theory advanced by the Resilience Research Center which described resilience as a “both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being, and their capacity individually and collectively to negotiate for these resources to be provided in culturally meaningful ways.” Additionally, the American Psychological Association (2014) as lifted in the study of Southwick et al., (2014) defines resilience as “the

process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress.” In particular, this paper would like to find out how resilience is displayed in the context of children whose parents are incarcerated. This study aims to concretely describe Luthar and Eisenberg's (2017) concept of a resilient child. According to them, a resilient child is one who exhibits positive adaptation in circumstances where one might typically expect a significant degradation of coping skills due to atypical levels of stress.

Simultaneously, this study used survey questionnaires to gather profiles of the respondents and child participants, including their performance in school and their behavior as observed by the teachers. A one-on-one interview was conducted to learn about the children's struggles and how they cope with their suffering. Data gathering started with asking permission from the CSWD with the intention of considering children under their care as participants. Permission was granted. However, there were only three children there whose parents were incarcerated. Thus, the

researchers proceeded to the Bureau of Jail Management in Butuan City to seek permission and ask thirty inmates who would be willing to participate in the study by giving their consent and have their children as participants of the case study. The permission was granted and the researchers were allowed to meet thirty inmates. The researchers explained the purpose of the study and promised that the identity of their children will be protected and that data gathered will be held confidential and shall be used solely for the purpose of the study. Twenty – five inmates gave their consent. They gave the name of their children and the schools where their children are studying. The researchers then proceeded to the schools within Butuan City where the potential child participants are studying. Permits from respective principals were also sought. Each School looked into their Learner Information System (LIS) to find the child participants. However, only 12 of the children with parent's consent from the inmates were found. This suggests a number of things. First, it implies that some incarcerated fathers were no longer informed that

their children have transferred or have already left school. This can be proven by statements of some inmates during the meet up that they were not sure where their children are currently studying or what grade levels they are in since a lot of them have no longer visited their father.

Di jud ko sigurado ma'am kung naa pa siya diha nga school ug unsa nay grado kay dugay na sila wa ka bisita." (I am not sure where my child is studying now and what grade level he is now because it has been a while since he has not visited me).

Second, it could also be that incarcerated fathers have not seen their children for quite a length of time. This was corroborated by most of the child participants during the interview; they affirm that they seldom visit their father because they do not have even fare in going to the jail.

"Panagsa ra kaayo makadalaw sa jail kay wa may plete (we seldom visit our father at the jail because we do not have money for fare). Moreover, they could not bring presents. *"Wa poy mada para kang papa"* (we have nothing to bring for our father). Even their mother

or any member of the family could hardly visit because of financial difficulty. Consequently, the researchers had to consider this situation as a limitation of the study, having gathered only 12 out of the 20 target participants.

The researchers, upon meeting child respondents, conducted certain verifications before giving the instrument. The child must identify whether a particular name of the inmate is known to him and affirm that he is his or her father. Then, the researchers explained the purpose of the study and informed the child that his/ her father has given consent in his / her participation in the study. The child was asked for his/her consent in the participation of the study. Once the child agreed, the child would respond to the instrument **provided by the researcher; meanwhile,** his/her teacher would also be asked to respond to a different questionnaire. A total of thirteen (13) teachers were involved in the study.

Instrumentation and Data Analysis

Two sets of instruments were prepared. The first set was for the child participants, from whom basic information was collected while ensuring their anonymity was maintained. The important part of the profile was only the age, grade level, number of siblings, their knowledge of the length of time when their parents have been incarcerated and the story of coping, struggles met as a result of having a parent in prison, and the source of support that helped them to survive.

The second set was for the teachers, who were asked to describe the child-participants in terms of academic performance and observable behavior. The academic performance is described as follows:

Outstanding (90-100) Satisfactory (80-84)

Fairly satisfactory (75-79) Very satisfactory (85-89)

Needing help (75 and below)

Conversely, negative behavior is categorized as either internalizing or externalizing, based on the findings of Wildeman et al. (2017) and Li (2022). An internalizing behavior is directed inwardly toward self, such as being withdrawn, anxious and depressed. Externalizing behavior on the other hand is an outer-directed type of child problem behavior such as aggression, defiance, and conduct disorder. Some positive behaviors were also added by the researchers, such as being attentive, and adaptable; teachers were given a leeway to describe the behavior of the child participants and use more appropriate descriptors.

Results and Discussion

On Profile of Child-Participants

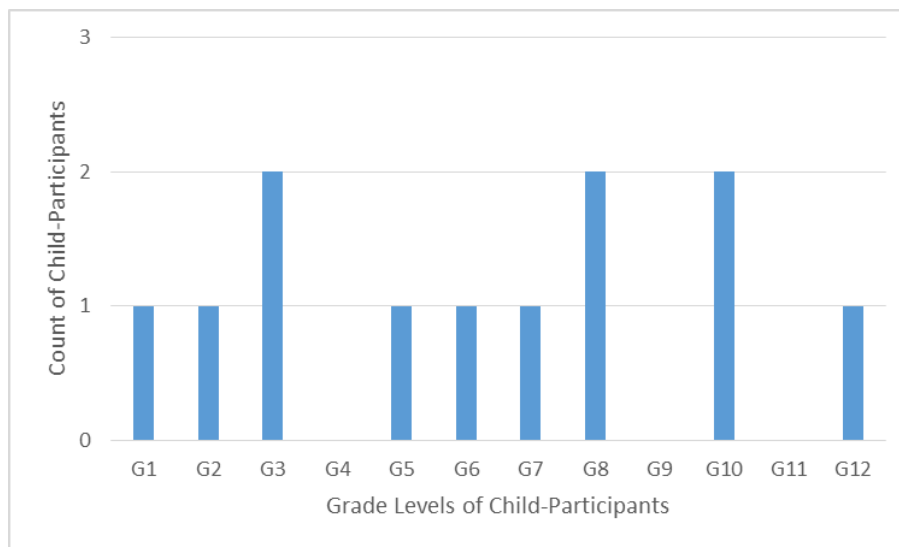


Fig 1. Grade Level Distribution of the Child-Participants

Figure 1 reveals that six (6) child participants were in the Grade School. Five (5) are in the Junior High School and one (1) is in the senior high school. This presents a good representation of the basic education levels where child participants were enrolled in. This further shows that the

child participants are diverse both in age and level of education.

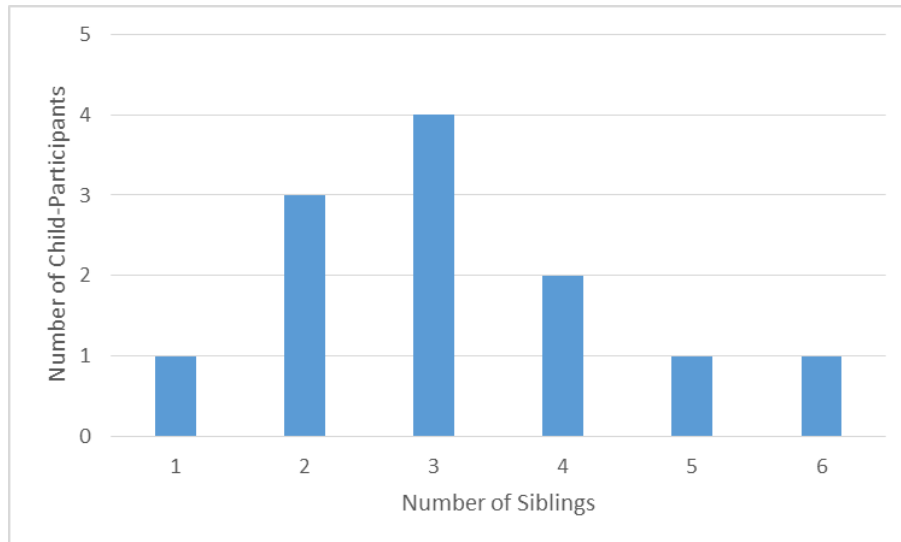


Fig 2. Number of Siblings of the Child-Participants Involved

The graph shows the count of siblings for the child participants. It can be seen that the number of siblings ranges from one to six, with three (3) having the highest count. This shows the number of children left to the care of the parent or guardian when the mother or the father or both are incarcerated. Raising these children entails responding to their needs, not only the basic ones but also psychological, emotional and educational needs. This entails the need for support from family members and

relatives to ease out the burden of this concern. With this data, the researchers are hopeful that relationships between siblings remain intact as they need to stay strong in the midst of adversity. Sidhu (2019), mentioned that, there is evidence to suggest that healthy sibling relationships promote empathy, pro-social behavior, and academic achievement. Further, healthy sibling relationships can be an incredible source of support.

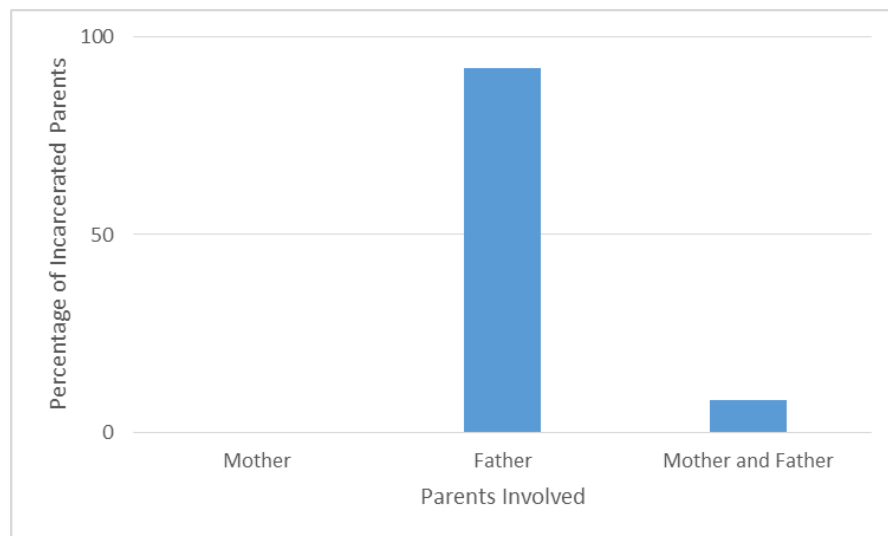


Fig 3. Percentage of Incarcerated Parent in Terms of Family Roles

Figure 3 shows the proportion among incarcerated parents. It is clear that the percentage of incarceration among fathers is the highest; however, there is also an instance where both parents are incarcerated. This implies that the children are left to the care of family guardians or to institutions such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). This is similar to the study of Kaeble and Glaze (2016) in the study of Charles et al. (2019) in the United States of America, which states that children affected by incarceration will have at least one parent involved in the justice system. Glaze et al. (2018) mentioned that fathers account for 92% of incarcerated parents. Moreover, fathers are more likely than mothers to be in prison for violent crimes (45% versus 26% in state prison; 12% vs. 6% in federal prison). In the Philippines, according to the statistical data from the Bureau of Jail Management (September 30, 2022) 89.28% accounts for male and 10.72% accounts for female detained individuals both sentenced and not. In the case of Caraga, 93.97% are male and the remaining 6.03% are female. Therefore, the table is reflective

of the national situation in terms of the percentage of incarcerated men and women in the country and even abroad such as the USA.

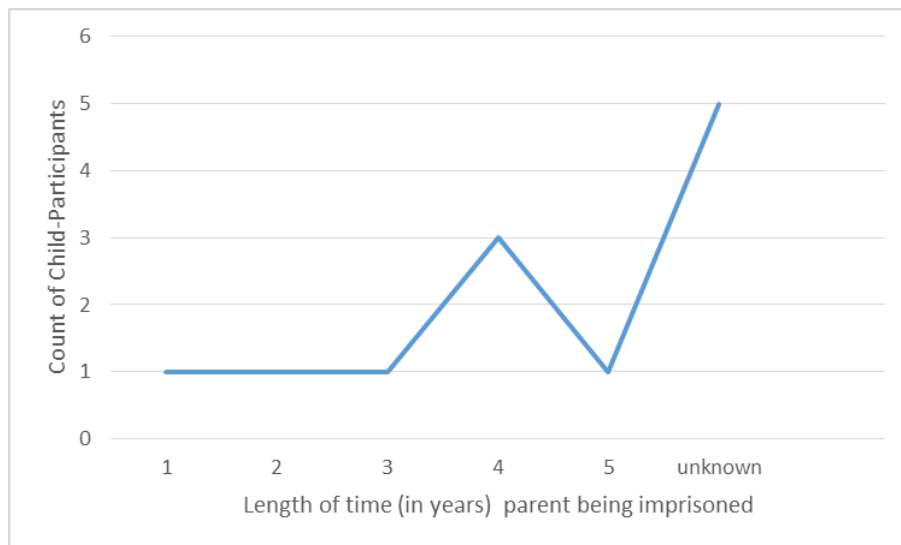


Fig 4. Length of Incarceration (in years)

Children who participated in the survey were asked how many years their parents have been behind bars. Seven (7) out of twelve (12) of them are aware of how long their parents have been incarcerated, which is between one (1) to five (5) years. This can be seen in Figure 4. It can be noted that some child participants are unsure of the exact number of years when their parents have been incarcerated. This could possibly mean that they no longer count the length

of time that their parents have been there and they have tried to find ways to survive while acknowledging the situation of their loved one. This is further supported by their revelation that some have to look for means to survive, like working to earn for food and help support the other members of the family. Some may have forgotten to count because they haven't visited for a length of time due to poverty.

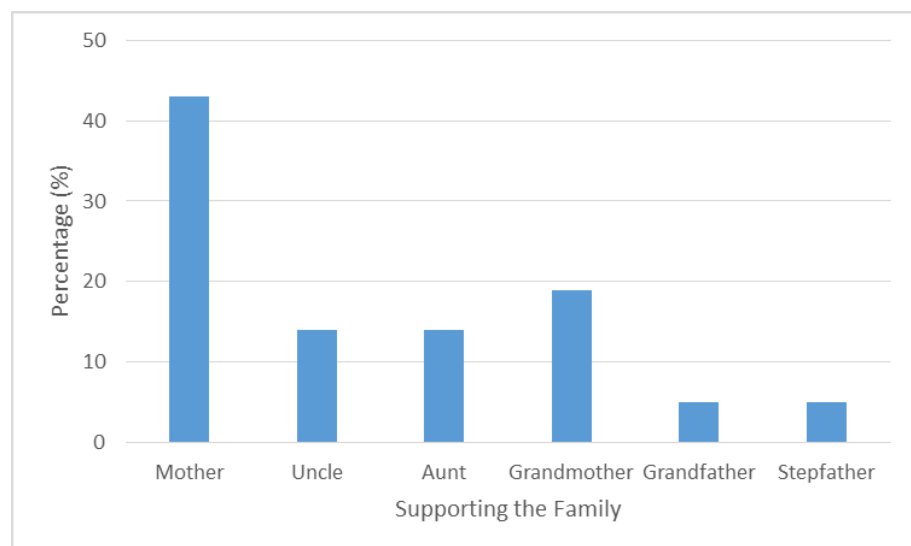


Fig 5. Percentage of support from family members

Figure 5 shows the proportion of family members who show support when a parent gets incarcerated. It reveals that mothers become the primary support in cases where

the fathers are incarcerated, as seen in Figure 3. It is also notable that other members of the extended family showed support to the incarcerated children. Turney (2019) said that an estimated 2.7 million children—or 1 in 28 of those under the age of 18—have a biological mother or father who is incarcerated in a local jail, state prison, or federal prison. When this happens, children must be in the custody of a parent or a responsible legal guardian. There are six on the list, starting with the mother, who is over 40% as the primary caregiver when it is the father who gets incarcerated. The support of aunts, uncles, grandparents, and stepfathers comes next, in varied degrees. The assistance from aunts, uncles, and grandmothers accounts for 14% to 19% of the total. It is remarkable to note how an extended family helps a mother who is left with children whose partner is in prison. The nuclear family and the extended family are two sources of support that are becoming more prevalent. This exhibits strong family ties which greatly speaks of the Filipino spirit. Further, this is an inherent Filipino culture of being supportive to one another, especially during difficult times.

The report of Dr Masten in the study of Southwick et al. (2014) states that resilience in humans is distributed across many interacting systems. As social species, there are fundamental adaptive systems that have come down to each person which interact continuously with the environment. When it comes to children, they are products of evolution and they are very adaptive but part of that capacity is embedded in the caregiver bond. This is evident in the table where relatives help provide for the children's needs.

On Stories of Struggle

The researchers documented the child-participants' struggles. Recurring themes are reflected in Table 1.

Table 1. A. Stories of Struggle

Major Theme	Narratives
<p><i>A. Finding shelter in local government units for the disadvantaged individuals, and finding shelter among the relatives</i></p>	<p>Puyo sa CSWD pila ka bulan, 8 months with no allowance, mingaw, lisod (<i>found shelter under City Social Welfare and Development for eight (8) months having no allowance, lonely and in a difficult situation</i>)</p>
	<p>2 years in CSWD shelter undergoing holistic formation</p>
	<p>puyo sa CSWD pila ka bulan, uli sa lola, usahay lakaw (<i>found shelter under City Social Welfare and Development for few months, sometimes went home to grandmother and sometimes left home or the CSWS shelter</i>)</p>
	<p>balhin - balhin mig puyo (<i>we keep on moving from one place to another</i>)</p>

When one of the parents of a child is imprisoned, there is a likelihood that children will face changes when it comes to living arrangements. Table 1.A shows the first theme which is about finding shelter in local government unit for the disadvantaged individuals along with the related narratives. Turney (2019), puts it that

"In the wake of parental incarceration, families experience a variety of challenges, including economic insecurity, altered household and relationship dynamics and routines, changes in parenting, and changes in parental health".

This assertion is seen by the data in Table 1.A on changing routines and dynamics in the home and in relationships. However, it is remarkable that our local government unit through City Social Welfare and Development (CSWD) of Butuan extends help to the needy. It is also the CSWD's service mission to provide excellent quality interventions and opportunities to the disadvantaged sectors for social protection and development through the delivery of enhanced basic social

services (<https://ligaocity.albay.gov.ph/>). On one hand, changes in the home environment or seeking shelter in government units with other children facing difficulties like abandonment and separation can be very challenging and painful for growing-up children. On the other hand, these challenges can also provide opportunities for building resilience and forming supportive connections. Adjustment and adaptability are necessary to endure and survive in such an environment.

Other than support from the government, it is also good to note that children receive care from their grandparents and relatives. Cassidy et al. (2014), state that there is emerging evidence that child caregivers experience some positive effects or benefits from their caring despite the demands of the role. Their presence reduces negative outcomes. Moreover, Nichols et al. (2016) said that maintaining a family's warmth, connection, support, and presence of role models during and following incarceration increases potential resiliency. Having to dwell in government shelters and with relatives can be an

opportunity to develop positive adaptations when children experience caring relationships that will allow them to move on positively.

Table 1.B. Stories of Struggle continued

Major Theme	Narratives
<i>B. Distorted family structures</i>	kada Domingo mi bisita kang papa (<i>we visit father every Sunday</i>)
	nagbulag sila mama ug papa (<i>our parents got separated</i>)
	Pag gawas ni papa natao pod among manghud sa lain (<i>when father was released from prison, our brother from another man was also born</i>)
	Sad ko kung naay mga occasion kay di mi complete (<i>I am sad when there are occasions because we are not complete as a family</i>)

	Akong mga cousins kay complete family sila (<i>my cousins are complete as a family</i>)
	Si mama niadto ug Manila mao akong mga manghud tua na ila lola (<i>Mother left for Manila leaving my sister to my grandmother</i>)

The second recorded theme is distorted family structures. In the study of Johnson and Arditti (2023), along with the thoughts of Casey et al. (2015) and Muentner et al. (2019), parental incarceration intersects with residential instability and homelessness in ways that further marginalize families. In a similar vein, Adler (2021) also said that housing insecurity both precedes and follows incarceration. Frequent changes in life circumstances essentially deny children the necessary stability, security and support to develop stable relationships, self-esteem, personal autonomy and resilience. Table 1.2 reflects the associated narratives of the child- participants experiencing

a lot of changes in family relationships and dynamics. Visiting their father every Sunday implies that they have the means to do so. To some extent, communication is maintained although family dynamics have been altered.

Nevertheless, longing for a complete family when special occasions are celebrated implies a very Filipino value of having families together on special occasions. This longing is intensified by an implied envious feeling of having to see cousins enjoy with members of the family together on special occasions. More painful to hear is a sharing that their younger brother was born when their father was released from prison, which implies that fidelity among partners or spouses was not sustained while the husband was incarcerated. Studies consistently show that incarceration during marriage is correlated with higher divorce rates. (Lind, 2014). This is also reinforced by the findings of Kreiger et.al 2018 that couples rated relationship happiness significantly lower during post release. This indicates that obstacles during incarceration reverberates

even during the post release. Moreover, distorted family structures and relationships caused separation from loved ones, having to move to other places, and leaving children for various reasons. Needless to say, incarceration did not only lead to separation but to broken homes and relationships.

Table 1. C. Stories of Struggles continued

Major Theme	
<i>C. Financial Hardships</i>	Lisod way pang gasto sa school. di mi kabisita kang papa kay wa may plete. wa pod mi mada pag dalaw (<i>we have difficulty providing for our school needs and we can not visit father because we do not have fare, we can not also bring him something</i>)
	usahay tabang pod gikan ila lola, usahay sa mga amigo pod (<i>sometimes we get help from grandmother and from our friends</i>)
	financial support gikan sa igsoon sa akong stepfather (<i>received financial help from the siblings of my stepfather</i>)

Table 1.C shows the third recorded theme. It is possible to see the financial impact when the incarcerated parent is the one providing for their needs. The children and the other parent left can also face financial hardship. This is evident in the case studied as one has to do hard labor without a regular pay. It is also corroborated by the earlier statements that they could not visit their father as often because they do not have money for fare and to buy goods for their incarcerated father. Financial difficulty has a rippling effect among children in school. The findings of the study conducted by Nichols et al. (2016) supports the view that incarcerated children have difficulty accessing education due to socioeconomic adversities. This could be due to the fact that education really needs materials, supplies and even gadgets to support learning. In the report of Garcia et al 2016, they stated that students in poverty and trauma always lag behind in their academic performance and would likely drop out. If poverty and pain remain

unabated, the long-term effect could be that students' gifts go undeveloped due to a lack of education. This may perpetuate the same cycle of a difficult life rather than fostering transformation.

Table 2.A. Stories of Resilience

Major Theme	Narratives
<p><i>A. Thriving in life through different ways and means of survival</i></p>	<p>maglabor (find a piece-work)</p>
	<p>mag referee para pangkaon (<i>becoming referee in games to earn something from the game</i>)</p>
	<p>mata kog alas 2 para mangispat anang magdeliver ug mga shell sa merkado. Usahay witkan pod ko pangkaon. Ang mga tagak nga shell akong tigumon usahay ibaligya usahay pangkaon pod (<i>sometimes I wake up at 2:00 am to wait for those who will deliver shells in the market. I will help them carry the deliveries and they would spare me some coins.</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes they give me some shells which I also sell for food</i>)</p>

paghuna-huna na positibo sa kinabuhì (*I think on the positive side of life.*)

Table 2.A displays the child-participants' own accounts of what it is like to have a parent in prison when it comes to ways and means of survival. This is the fourth recorded theme. This can very well be supported by their narratives at the right side of the table. Turney (2019), mentioned that children with an incarcerated mother or father face new economic challenges that stem directly from the incarceration of their parents, in addition to the economic challenges that may have led up to the arrest. In this case, having to work at dawn without being paid but to hope for some sort of tip or to be spared with some coins just to be able to get something to buy food is grueling. The fact that these children continue to attend school, despite their basic

needs not being met by their parents but by the children themselves, is a testament to their remarkable strength at such a young age. Although they face numerous difficulties, it is commendable that they continue to live as simply as possible. Their methods of sustenance demonstrate their hopeful outlook on life. It is truly impressive to see that, despite the challenging circumstances, they are still thriving. This can be supported by the study of Turney (2019) that children who have caring adults in their lives are likely to be resilient in the face of challenges such as parental incarceration. The children said that their stepfathers, friends, siblings, and grandparents provided them with financial assistance. Additionally, this is consistent with Table 4, which shows the percentage of family members that express support when a parent gets incarcerated.

Table 2.B. Stories of Resilience continued

Major Theme	Narratives
<i>B. Having a strong determination to pursue studies despite the odds</i>	Padayon pag eskwela para matabangan si Mama <i>(continue studying to help my mother)</i>
	maningkamot, magtarung skwela pra matabangan ang pamilya puhon <i>(strive hard and study well to help my family someday)</i>
	padayon sa pag eskwela, gitabangan sa igsoon na babae sa akong papa <i>(continue schooling while receiving help from my aunt)</i>
	mag-focus sa pag eskwela <i>(focus on studies)</i>

The fifth recorded theme is a strong determination to pursue studies despite the odds. Children who have a parent in prison, whether it's their father or their mother, have a lot of challenges. However, it is important to

highlight that they chose to continue their studies. Their narratives, which are heart melting, can be seen in Table 2.B. Looking at their desire to continue their studies and be able to help their families despite their hardships and suffering, demonstrate a positive hopeful attitude which empowers them to chart a course of themselves moving forward rather than choosing to despair and succumb to helplessness and fail even more. It is also important to note that child participants believe that by continuing their studies would liberate their hardships one day. They hope that education will make their lives better in the future.

Meanwhile, Arias (2016) said that one trait of resilience by individuals is the ability to cultivate and sustain supportive relationships with those around them. The participants' narratives imply that they get help from relatives which shows that they can maintain good relationships with relatives despite separation from incarcerated parents. Similarly, Luthar and Eisenberg (2017) shared the importance of supportive relationships with parents and caregivers of children. Miller

et al. (2022) explored how intersecting social ecologies within family, school, and community networks contribute to the development of identity and a sense of belonging can form a resilient system that provides resources for well-being. These findings are of particular interest as they point to how the quality of the parenting relationship and the wider support networks can build childhood resilience. Linking this to Table 1.E, the researchers can infer that child-participants in this study have such strong family ties that they are able to adjust to the challenging situation they are in. On the other hand, this also reflects that children have seen meaning in their situation and are bound to move forward rather than languish and dwell on their difficult situation.

On Observable Behavior Data

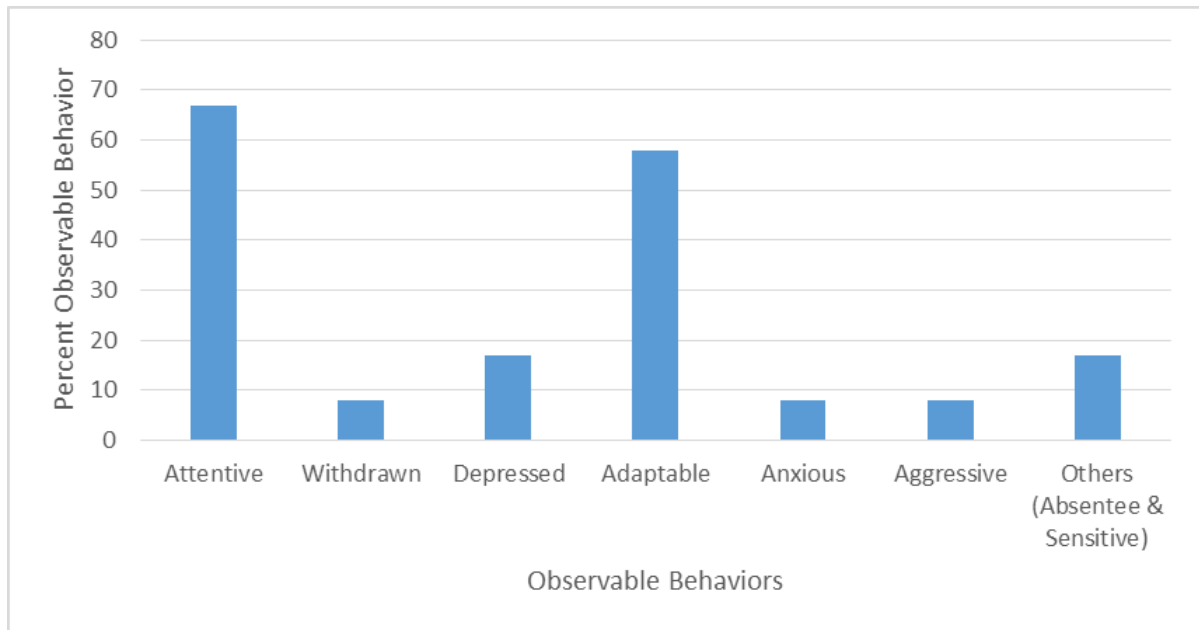


Fig 6. Observable Behaviors Manifested by the Child-Participants as Perceived by their Advisers

It is thought that children may experience emotional stress due to their parents' incarceration. Johnson and Arditti (2023) explored the impact of parental incarceration on children's behavior and mental health. They found that children with incarcerated parents are more likely to exhibit antisocial behaviors and face mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression. The study emphasizes the

importance of considering the broader context of adverse childhood experiences and the role of supportive environments in mitigating negative outcomes. Additionally, Jackson et al. (2021) conducted research highlighting that parental incarceration is a significant risk factor for children's adverse health and behavioral outcomes, reinforcing the association between parental incarceration and increased antisocial behavior in children. The study also discusses the critical need for supportive interventions to help these children cope with their unique challenges. This statement can be verified based on the data gathered in this study and is reflected in Figure 6. These behaviors are described as positive behaviors and negative internalizing or externalizing behaviors and are picked out from the study of Wildeman et al. (2017). Positive behaviors include being (a) attentive; and (b) adaptable. While negative internalizing behaviors include being (a) withdrawn; (b) depressed; (c) anxious; and externalizing includes being (d) aggressive. Among these observable behaviors, it is clear that positive behaviors showed a high

percentage over the negative internalizing and externalizing behaviors. As illustrated in Figure 6, 58%-68% of the child participants were attentive and adaptable. In contrast, around 8% to 18% of them were observed as withdrawn, depressed, anxious, aggressive, and sensitive. In their study, Nichols et al. (2016) discovered that children of jailed parents are frequently perceived as having a higher chance of behavioral problems. Parental incarceration has also been linked to externalizing behaviors and delinquency in children, according to Johnson & Arditti (2023) and Antle et al. (2020).

However, in a separate study conducted by Johnson and Arditti (2023), along with Bomysoad & Francis (2022), they found that children with incarcerated mothers who felt confident in their ability to overcome challenges had fewer internalizing and externalizing problems than children who were less hopeful and optimistic; adolescents who were perceived by their parents as being high in resilience, operationalized in terms of whether children stay calm and in control when faced with a challenge were less likely to

have current diagnoses of depression, anxiety, behavioral/conduct problems, and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. Such is found similarly in this study when more positive behaviors were displayed over the negative ones. This case at hand negates the findings of Gifford et al. (2019) that parental incarceration leads to more aggressive and antisocial behaviors. Further, the data holds untrue on the findings of Wildeman, et.al, (2017) that the stigma of paternal incarceration shapes teachers' expectations of students, leading to a 10 percent to 40 percent increase in teachers' expectations of children's behavioral problems. It turned out that teachers observe more positive behaviors than negative ones.

On Academic Performance

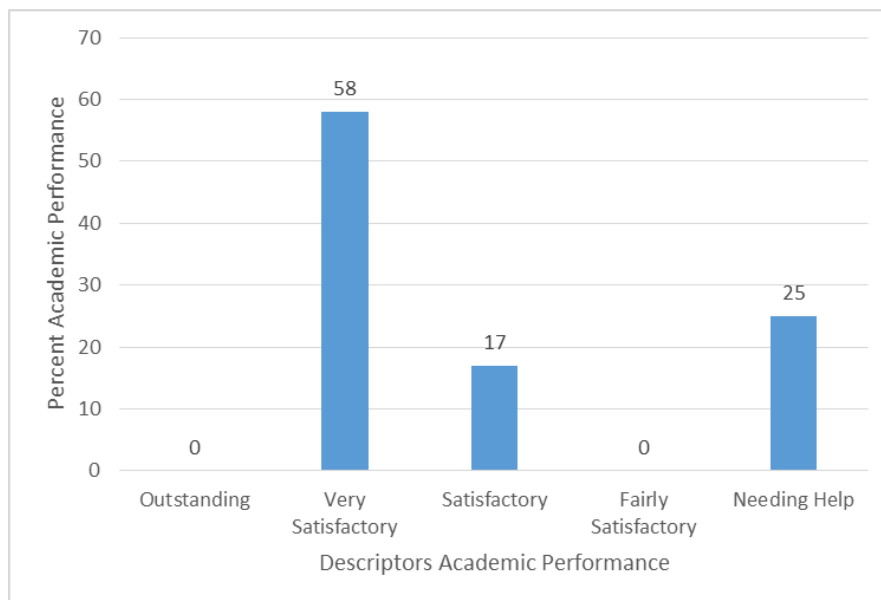


Fig 7. Academic Performance of Child-Participants by Descriptors

The academic performance of each child-participant was sought from his/her respective teacher-adviser. This was done to check if children of incarcerated parents continue to go to school and if so, this study would like to see how far these children are performing academically. It is good to note that these children still continue to go to school despite the existing problem they are experiencing. Figure 8 shows the

academic performance by descriptors of the sampled child-participants as assessed by their advisers. It can be gleaned from the figure that more than 50% performed at the "Very Satisfactory Level". This descriptor means that the children have grades ranging from 85 to 89. This is quite an impressive academic performance for children who are in the situation of instability and adversity. Although they may not be seen performing at the "Outstanding Level", their being in school allows one to see that they value education. This is further substantiated by their narratives, which detail how they cope with their struggles. Their academic performance, with "Very Satisfactory" at the peak, is a notable mark for the child-participants. The academic performance exhibited by the children is a good indicator of showing resilience. The support they got from their immediate parents or relatives has also played an important factor in this. This can be supported by the work of Nichols et al. (2016), emphasizing parent-family connection, where a close bond with a loving, supportive, and effective caregiver is an important factor in supporting positive development,

both in typically developing and high-risk youth. Even while they may be vulnerable, especially in terms of achieving good education and academic performance, they tend to moderate the situation internally by their personal coping strategies and externally by the stable support from family members. These give them the motivation they need to progress, see the value of education, perform well in school, and lead regular lives.

However, positive measures are recommended for children who are really needing help. It is said that parental incarceration puts children at increased risk for school-related problems (Nichols et al., 2016; Shlafer et al., 2017; Johnson & Arditti 2023). This can: compromise The academic functioning of the children (Shlafer et al., 2017); lead to poor school performance (Gifford et al., 2019); and, negatively affect children's educational outcomes and opportunities (American Educator, 2019). Indeed, this holds true for our data, indicating that around 25% of the child participants are in need of academic assistance.

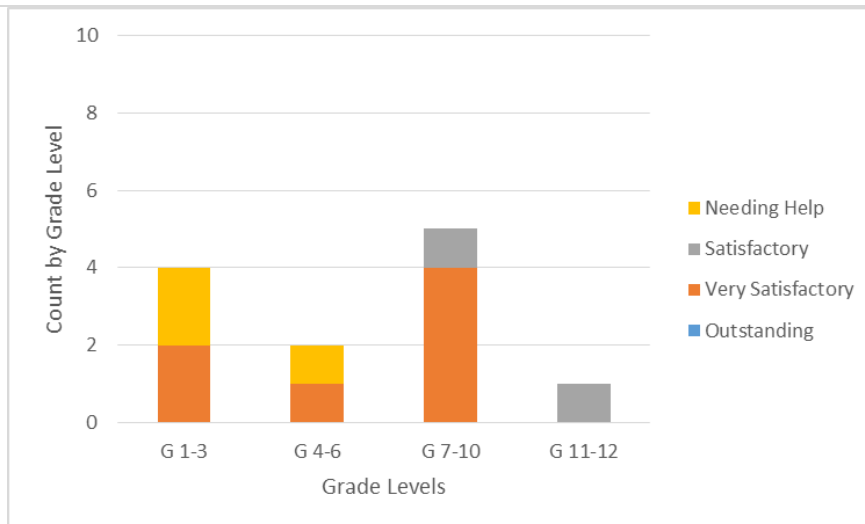


Fig 8. Descriptors-based Academic Performance of Child-Participants by Grade Levels

Driven by the desire to extend help in the future, the researchers would like to know which among the grade levels have performed better. Figure 8 depicts the descriptors-based academic performance of child-participants by Grade Levels. It can be seen that most of the children needing help come from the lower grade levels (G 1-6). However, it can also be noted that half of the participants falling in that grade level have done fairly well in their academics as some have very satisfactory descriptors. But it is evident that children belonging to G7-

10 are the ones able to perform better academically as most of them are in the "Very Satisfactory level". Grades 11-12 children are able to thrive in their academics with a descriptor of "Satisfactory". In view of this actual trend, the researchers infer the following: (a) *the possible adaptability of the older ones than the young ones considering that their developmental characteristics are directed toward increased independence as one progressed to higher developmental stage* (Simmons, 2000); (b) *presence of family member either nuclear or extended* (Fig 4); *stability of the caregivers that can give secure attachments* (Family Matters, 2003); and, (c) *awareness of the children that their parents are imprisoned.*

Conclusion

Children whose parents are in prison have undoubtedly experienced hardships, but it is encouraging to see that they have also demonstrated resilience in small ways. Children often struggle to find shelter, either through

local government help or by staying with relatives. Complicated family situations and financial difficulties make these challenges even harder. Nevertheless, children in this case have shown resilience and hope as seen in their positive outlook in life, performance in school and creative yet laborious ways to survive and thrive. Support from family and relatives promote resilience, aiding children to develop positive adaptation from their difficult situation helping them to move forward finding ways and means to survive. The study found that resilience is not only an individual capability to adapt and bounce back but it is also a collective effort among the significant others surrounding the individual to navigate the situation and respond in meaningful ways to sustain well - being.

Recommendations

It is recommended that children of incarcerated parents be given priority in social services by the government. Non-government organizations and

educational institutions may consider supporting this sector of the society through extension programs. Academic institutions such as FSUU can consider the incarcerated children as their recipient for Tulong Dunong Program. This program is a community extension service provided by the FSUU - Teacher Education Program (TEP) in coordination with the Community and Involvement and Advocacy (CINA) office to specific adopted schools. It allows student teachers to assist in teaching reading and numeracy to pupils, enhancing their foundational skills through practical teaching experiences. Mapping of their location can be done to point out schools where they are more in number to prioritize them for tutorial help especially among the lower grade levels. They may also be considered for support and donations, such as school supplies and other school needs. They may also be provided with psychosocial support to help them transition from their difficult situation to find meaning and reach self- efficacy. It is recommended further that this study be expanded to include more participants and a deeper

analysis of their needs be drawn or identified. Finally, this study may be considered one of the inputs for policies in the local government and programs of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

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