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**“Under-Performing” or Resilient Filipino Boys in Education? Listening to Students’ and Adults’ Perspectives and Backgrounds: A Western Visayas Case**

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March 2018

**Abstract**

This paper presents our research results based on field research in the province of Antique in Western Visayas, the Philippines. Through interviews with high school students who have had difficulties in pursuing school education continuously, as well as the school principal and teachers, the major research concerns of this study include the gender patterns in schooling and education, and focus on several unique male students. In particular, this study tries to show resilience among previously out-of-school students who succeeded in returning to formal high school. In so doing, it identifies the obstacles that tend to keep Filipino boys out of school and, in contrast to their somewhat stereotyped images to date, aims to present an alternative image of “resilient” boys.

**Keywords:** High school; Boys’ Under-performance; Poverty; Dropout; Resilience; *Barkada*

**JEL classification:** I21, I24, I31, J24

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**“UNDER-PERFORMING” OR RESILIENT FILIPINO BOYS IN EDUCATION?  
LISTENING TO STUDENTS’ AND ADULTS’ PERSPECTIVES AND  
BACKGROUNDS: A WESTERN VISAYAS CASE\***

MASAYOSHI OKABE\*\*

March 2018

*Abstract*

Through our field research in the province of Antique, the Western Visayas, the Philippines, we did interviews and interactive discussions with high school students who have had difficulties in pursuing continuously school education, as well as with school principal and teachers. The major research concerns of this study include the gender patterns in schooling and education, and then focus on several unique male students. In particular, this study tries to show resilience among previously out-of-school students who succeeded in returning to high school. In so doing, it identifies the obstacles that tend to keep Filipino boys out of school and, in contrast to their somewhat stereotyped images to date, presents an alternative image of “resilient” boys.

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\**Note:* As nature of discussion paper, this version is a work-in-progress, subject to revisions and changes before formal submission to a suitable journal or media and their publication.

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## I. INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATIONS

Education has, in itself, the ultimate value of developing individuals, but it also serves as one of the key engines for socioeconomic development and poverty alleviation, serving as a cumulative process throughout the lifecycles even up to the next generation and thus contributing to sustainable development (Heckman 2013; Sachs 2015). International development and aid communities have promoted the delivery of “education for all” in developing countries (e.g., Education for All [EFA] in 1990, Dakar Action Framework in 2000, Millennium Development Goals [MDGs] in 2000, and these philosophies are taken over by the post-MDG Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] from 2015).

The Philippines, which is the country discussed in this study, has achieved almost universal primary education since the 1990s with an enrolment ratio of at least 90 percent. Despite such improvements in access to education, the gender gaps in education have persisted though this might not be easily accepted when considering the country’s high level of gender equality in international discourse, which always describes Filipino women as having greater participation and empowerment in society than their counterparts in major parts of the developing world. Generally, in many countries, both education and labor markets favor males (King and Hill 1998). In this sense, the reverse is true for education in education in the Philippines.<sup>1</sup> King and Hill (1998: p. 251) explained that “the Philippines has made strong advances in educating girls and women [...]. Even before World War II, and especially afterward, the country implemented a massive expansion of its education system.”<sup>2</sup>

As part of the global discourse, the Philippines’ gender equality in the

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<sup>1</sup> The “reverse” pattern of inequality disadvantaging men is also referred to by Miralao (2008: p. 129), where it refers to another sense of reverse. Miralao (2008) states that educational patterns are reversed in comparison with older generations, when there were fewer women who could pursue higher education than the current generations now do. Miralao (2008) also used the expression “boys’ crisis” in terms of contemporary Filipino boys lagging behind girls in education.

<sup>2</sup> King and Hill (1998: p. 255) also add that although the Philippines spends less public money on education, it has made remarkable progress in education in general, and in female education in particular.

socioeconomic field is illustrated by the comparable cross-country indices from the World Economic Forum (WEF). The WEF releases the global gender gap index (Table 1) for easy comparison of gender gaps across countries. In the WEF indices, the Philippines has ranked highly in achieving gender equality; the index indicates the highest possible score, 1 (equality), and the lowest possible score, 0 (inequality). Indeed, the Philippines has outranked the Asian countries and ranked among the top ten countries in terms of achieving gender equality along with some developed countries. The higher ranked countries include the northern European countries—Iceland, Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Ireland.<sup>3</sup> With respect to gender equality, one can already say that the Philippines has established its impressive status in comparison to other Asian and even developed countries.

--- Table 1 around Here ---

The global gender gap index (hereafter, GGGI) is measured by or decomposed into equality indices on economic activity, education, and health and survival, respectively. The GGGI aggregates these economic and human development dimensions concerning men and women. Table 2 shows the disaggregated indices concerning economic, educational, and health and survival information. Apparently, the Philippine's high GGGI contributes to high scores in human development fields such as education and health. The education and health scores are all ranked in first place, and the scores are counted as one. This merely indicates that, if a particular female rate is equal to the corresponding male rate, it counts as one, the highest rank.

However, the educational information shows in fact that more females are successful as they pursue higher educational attainment than their male counterparts. Nonetheless, as long as we rely on a version of female-based gender equality that refers to whether or not females caught up with males, once females become equal

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<sup>3</sup> Although not shown on Table 1, Japan pales in comparison beside the Philippines and the northern European countries. For example, Japan ranked 104th (score 0.658) out of 142 countries in 2014; 107th (score 0.670) out of 145 countries in 2015; and 111th (score 0.660) out of 144 countries in 2016.

to males in the figures, the index will then always take a value of one even when females outperform males. It is noteworthy that the index-based information *per se* no longer captures the reverse situation in which males started to underperform. In turn, in economic activity, there is still clearly a gender gap that is unfavorable to women: Male labor force participation is much higher (81%) than that of their female counterparts (52%), where the ratio of females over males is 0.65; likewise, the female wage rate is 80% that of males, and income earned by women is also 69% of that earned by men.<sup>4</sup> Members of the national Congress party consist of more men than women. Still, the country profile GGGI of the Philippines is high owing to high achievements in education and health, despite the lower achievements related to the wider labor market. Only a portion of professional occupations show more women engaged in them than men.<sup>5</sup>

--- Table 2 around Here---

Can we then be optimistic enough to take the Philippines for granted as “already sufficient” (*okey na*) in achieving gender equality? When it comes now to education, indeed, a UN Report titled *Why Are Boys Under-performing in Education? Gender Analysis of Four Asia-Pacific Countries* raised concerns about an issue of “boys’ under-performing” in education (UNGEI 2012), and described Filipino boys in this term. In UNGEI (2012), the Philippines was studied as one of the four case study countries<sup>6</sup> that have been suffering from boys’ under-performing in education. Although gender-equal international education cooperation has always focused on girls’ education, in some regions boys’ performance is also emerging as a newly recognized concern. From a post-feminist viewpoint, Miralao (2008) is already alarmed and uses another expression—

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<sup>4</sup> This kind of unfavoring factors and situations against women in female labor participations were already stated by Serrano and Carteza (2014).

<sup>5</sup> As another viewpoint in disguise, it would be hasty at the same time to say conclusive judgement on favorability against either gender by relying on gender comparisons of labor force participation (rates) and average wage (rate). Considering that the female’s rate of those who engage in “professionals” ranks highly in contrast to labor force participation and wage rate (Table 2), it is not until controlling other individual background variables that we can say conclusively.

<sup>6</sup> The four countries include Malaysia, Thailand, Mongolia, and the Philippines.

“boys’ crisis”—to describe the phenomenon: boys’ lagging behind their female counterparts in education, which has the future potential, once again,<sup>7</sup> to burden Filipino females by the requirement on women to be more responsible in laboring outside and inside their families.

The background on why Filipino boys have tended to lag behind the girls has yet to be studied further. UNGEI (2012) proposed detailed studies to discuss the more disaggregated factors the Filipino boys face (and how these contrast with those for girls) to better understand the backgrounds and factors differentiating boy–girl educational attainment. This study aims at showing selected observations in the rural areas of the country by focusing on adult and student perspectives on understanding their circumstances. This paper attempts further hypothesis formation to understand the way to interpret the aforementioned *seemingly* reversed gender gap through these observations and analyses. UNGEI (2012) relied on Torres (2011) when discussing the Philippines case; upon reviewing and summarizing desk reviews and examining secondary data indicating that boys’ dropout rates are remarkable in lower secondary and in the transition from lower to upper secondary school, it was found that out-of-school boys are likely to be engaged in economic activities sooner than their female counterparts, and boys’ functional literacy rates are lower (both in and out of school) than those of girls. Torres (2011) explains that such boys’ underachievement in education is driven by adults’ (teachers) low expectations for boys; higher expectations that boys will be economically viable; boys’ passive classroom experience (low-skilled teachers; a gender-biased environment); and the stereotyping that boys are subject to. In the Philippine context, she insists, Filipino boys seem to face particular barriers in accessing primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education, the latter two of which are of typicality. Yet the kinds of barrier that will matter are not necessarily analyzed and explicated.

This study tries to explore the backgrounds and stories in which Filipino male students are situated by using an inductive approach. By interactively and directly listening to voices and discussing stories of selected students who have had difficulties in pursuing continuous schooling, this study shows some “resilience” among those

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<sup>7</sup> Critical perspectives on historical burdens to which Filipino women owed from pre-colonial era up to 1989 in the society, market, economy and nation were eloquently described by a work of Eviota (1992) from feministic and political economy approaches.

previously out-of-school students, who succeeded in returning to high school and discussing the hindrances to their education. In so doing, this research aims to show what obstacles tend to keep Filipino boys away from schools and provides an alternative image of “resilient” boys that contrasts with their somewhat stereotyped images to date.

The paper is structured as follows: Section II introduces the research aims, research site, outlines the field study, and positions it in the nationwide Philippine context. Section III provides a case study from school observations and discussion with the aforementioned eight male students who experienced dropping out first and then returning to school. This section, in particular, identifies the socioeconomic and familial factors that they refer to as hindering them from continuing in school and what encouraged them to return to school. Finally, Section IV summarizes some concluding remarks and limitations to be addressed in future.

## II. THE RESEARCH SITE AND OUTLINE OF THE FIELDWORK

As a starting point to investigate the circumstances in which boys and girls are placed, we planned preliminary research fieldwork. Through disaggregation and analysis of the Philippines’ recent nationally representative statistics, it turned out that the boys’ underperformance is more obviously dominant in provincial, rural, or poorer regions than in cities, urban, or richer regions such as Metro Manila. For example, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority’s (PSA) latest *2017 Philippine Statistical Yearbook*, the regional level net enrolment rates (NER) of secondary education were aggregated (Figure 1). The Figure 1 tells us that: (1) it is consistent with the UNGEI’s discourse of boys’ underperformance in education that more female students than males are enrolling in high schools across the Philippines; (2) NERs are higher in the national capital Metro Manila and regions in Luzon island (Regions I, II, III, IV-A, and CAR), while rates are lower in regions outside of Luzon such as the MIMAROPA, Visayan, and Mindanaoan regions (Regions IV-B, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, and ARMM); and (3) ARMM (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) stands out from other regions in terms of having the lowest enrolment rate.

Similar related trends are also found in Figure 2. The Figure 2 exhibits the

differences between male and female NERs and the relative proportions in percentages that account for the differences in total NER across regions. The visual information in Figure 2 is clearer in the male-female gaps in NER across the regions. Likewise, the regions outside of Luzon, such as MIMAROPA, Visayas, and Mindanao show higher gaps unfavorable to male students.

**--- Figures 1 and 2 around Here ---**

We selected a specific province from the Visayan regions. The UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office mentioned that “[i]n the Philippines, disparities favouring girls are consistent across all provinces but to varying degrees of severity. In provinces with highest overall survival rates, the disparity between boys and girls tends to be smallest. Metro Manila reported the most equitable rates of survival between the sexes, with just over one percentage point separating boys and girls. Western Mindanao (10.55), Western Visayas (11.38) and Central Visayas (13.03) report the largest percentage gaps between boys and girls” (UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, 2009: 33). To see the more typical places where gender disparity does not favor boys, we explored places outside of Luzon Island, and visited the province of Antique. Antique belongs to the Region VI, the Western Visayas Region.

In the Western Visayas Region, the local language is not Tagalog, which is the base for the national language Filipino. The languages Karay-a (Kinaray-a) and more regional common Hiligaynon (Ilonggo) are primarily spoken in Antique, and are part of the Visayan languages. In practice, however, people understand Filipino (Tagalog) because partly of education and the mass media, such as TV programs, music, news reports, etc. We stayed there from July 23 to 30, 2017 within the local residential areas. Interviews and research visits were conducted in English and Filipino (Tagalog) by this author. Some responses in the local Visayan languages by local students and adults were translated into Filipino or English by the school teachers and local research assistant so that they could be understood more easily.

**--- Figure 3 around Here ---**

The research site is located in the northern part of the province of Antique (Figure 3), accessible in less than two hours by car from the regional airport Kalibo on Panay Island. The province of Antique runs vertically north and south along the western coast of Panay Island facing the Sulu Sea. Taking advantage of this proximity to the sea, fishery and agriculture are the main industries, thus people's livelihoods rely on fish and agriculture production. Whereas Boracay Island, a tourism-driven economy, is located north near to Panay Island, most areas elsewhere are part of a regional economy dominated by primary industries. One farmers' meeting that we attended indicated that irrigation has been provided in some rice paddies while others remain less well equipped. In the rice paddies, rice seeds are still sown directly. This practice is certainly less labor intensive but eventually results in lower yields compared to the more labor-intensive equal-distance sowing.

We visited three elementary schools, two high schools, and one vocational school. Except for one high school, other schools were located near the *poblacion*—the municipality's central area. The other high school is located on a mountainous site where the school buildings are built on a steep slope: the buildings for the younger students are located on the lower parts of the slope and the buildings for senior grade students are on the hilly, higher part of the site. In this study, we selected observations of the students from one school (hereafter, called school A) among the schools that were visited.

### III. INVESTIGATING MALE STUDENTS WHO LEFT SCHOOL BUT LATER RETURNED: A CASE STUDY

In the School A, we conducted a group discussion and interview with eight male students to discuss their schooling histories. All of these students dropped out of the high school and later returned to this high school. In addition to this discussion, we also held preliminary household interviews in selected *barangays*, among those whose children go to school A, to listen to parental perceptions about education and livelihood, and especially about the features of the rural economy. This subsection examines the stories behind their decisions to leave school at that time according to their responses.

Before turning to the results found in the School A, we introduce the school characteristics by some data provided by the school principal. Table 3 displays the trends in enrolment data (by head count) of male and female students over the recent five school years (SY) from 2011–12 to 2015–16. Unlike the previous data mentioned above, these enrolment data do not show significant differences between male and female students. During the SY 2011–12 to SY 2012–13, more boys attended than girls (244 vs 218, and 277 vs 247, respectively). However, these numbers do not disclose information about the population as a term in probability theory. Schools can capture only the school-enrolling youths, but the school teachers admitted that they have no idea about the “out-of-school” youth who are not enrolled in schools but live in the community.

**--- Table 3 around here ---**

We turn now to the dropout numbers of the last four school years from SY 2012–13 to SY 2015–16. Although Table 3 does not show significant male-female differences in the number of students enrolled, dropping out look obviously like a phenomenon more typical of male students (Table 4). Likewise, even if students can barely stay in school, the promotion rates ( $\equiv 100\% - \text{failure rates}$ ) show the same trend: it is always more male students who fail the grade (Table 5). The Philippine educational system requires students in the same grade to be held over unless they pass the exams.

**--- Tables 4–5 around here---**

The typical provincial phenomenon of “boys under-performing” in education (UNGEI 2012), “boys’ crisis” (Miralao 2008), or the aforementioned note by UNICEF (2009) is also the case in School A. These male students commonly had had a noteworthy experience: they had dropped out of school and then returned. Our research design attempted to delve deeper into their schooling histories, and household and family circumstances through interacting with them. A school teacher served as the facilitator and translator of local Kinaray-a into Tagalog or English as well as our local assistant did. This author recorded their discussions and asked further questions while listening to

them.

#### A. *Observations and Results on the Backgrounds of Dropouts*

The discussion with them was held in the afternoon of July 24, 2017 for two hours. Each student is now enrolled in this school, so all of them wore the school uniform. They were aged from 13 to 19. Some students looked very tanned and grown-up with an air of roughness while others seemed passive. First, we observed their discussion on why they needed to leave school. The facilitator initially raised the topic to the students who began to answer and discuss their own backgrounds and reasons.

The reasons that students gave included:

- being “engaged in seasonal *trabaho* (occupation) of selling merchandise to acquire tuition fees (₱15 per hour)<sup>8</sup>
- having “no financial assistance from parents”
- providing “help for additional household income by working in the fishery”
- because of “lack of interest”
- because of “mother’s shrewish attitude”
- “*nag-enjoy*” (to enjoy) going to Manila to see his aunt”
- being “addicted to computer online games” (two students reported this as a reason)
- having “felt lazy so hung out with *barkada* (peer group friends)” (two students reported this)
- because of “asthma (physical problem)”
- because of being “bullied by classmates”

##### 1. Economic reasons and hindrances

First, students discussed their economic backgrounds and obstacles to attending school. As previously noted in the literature, students themselves mentioned labor-related reasons, such as being “engaged in a seasonal *trabaho* (occupation) of selling merchandise to acquire the tuition fee” at a wage of ₱15 per hour. At the same

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<sup>8</sup> As of the date of interview, ₱15 was equal around to 296¢ (US\$0.296) (<http://www.xe.com/currencytables/?from=PHP&date=2017-07-24> [accessed February 25, 2018]).

time, as high school students they already faced the necessity and demand to work for various reasons, which typically involved poverty and lack of finances; these reasons were directly stated: “no financial assistance from parents” and (providing) “help for additional household income by fishery working.”

According to the teachers and students, many people in this village live by fishery and agriculture, but the fishery work was “unstable in getting income.” For example, fishermen occasionally cannot go fishing when the weather is bad, and almost half a year corresponds to the rainy season in the Philippines. Rain and wind hinder the operations. Depending both on the weather and on the probability of a haul of fish, fishermen tend to cope with fluctuations over the short run, which in turn requires children to help their parents improve their family’s livelihood by sometimes working.

As a related opinion, one elementary school teacher from this village referred to a cultural attitude whereby boys tend to be more expected than girls to help improve the family income by helping their parents’ and neighbors’ (*ng mga kapitbahay*) in income-creating activities, and particularly agricultural and fishery activities. The teacher also felt that it would not always be viewed as culturally unacceptable if students started to work in the fields out of need. While work under the legal age would count as child labor, it was not negatively perceived as in normative discussions elsewhere against child labor. This teacher also noted that, “from her own personal opinion,” it was always true that the less demand we have for child labor, regardless of reasons, the better the educational situation is; “therefore” she sometimes personally assisted the students from her own pocket.

## 2. Personal dispositions or non-cognitive skills in learning

Aside from poor backgrounds, other students stated that dropping out was because they always felt “lazy” in learning in school, and another expressed himself as “*walang interes*” (having “no interest” or “not finding it interesting”). These two cases may relate to each other because they reference seemingly personal dispositions, or personality and character. Once their interests in studying at high school starts to decrease, their internal motivations to keep themselves in school will also decline. As a result of losing interest in school, they recalled having found other activities that are then

more interesting.

The respondent who answered “laziness,” explained that he actually hung out with a so-called “*barkada*” (peer group). When asked what they did when together, the student explained haltingly that the *barkada* enjoyed early drinking (e.g., gin, hard beer), smoking (*manigarilyo*), roaming around outside, and playing basketball for example. In listening to this, other boys added that, “actually, they do not have initial plans from the beginning [regarding] what to do.” They do not always have a certain purpose. Rather, activities as “*barkada-ship*” are viewed as *ad hoc*.<sup>9</sup>

Also, two students repeatedly expressed themselves as “addicted” to online computer games. According to them, there are what they called “computer-game shops” in the villages that are equipped with up to a dozen computers. For comparatively reasonable fees (e.g., ₱15 for 30 minutes), those who do not own their own computers can go to the shop and enjoy online internet service. Youth are said to be keenly sensitive to “bandwagon” trends such as fashion, games, and celebrities. The SNS (social network services), such as Facebook, Messenger, and Instagram, are also important in their daily lives. The lack of interest in school or feelings of laziness may easily be translated into a fondness for visiting computer game shops. It was concurrently pointed by some mothers whom we visited that their sons visit too often to continue their schooling. Sometimes, mothers cannot control how frequently their sons engage in these activities as they become older adolescents.

### 3. Negative experiences physically or mentally

The next points raised included negative experiences both physical and mental. As one student referred to this as “asthma,” it is easy to imagine that sickness or physical disability hinders students from continuous studying through their loss of ability to concentrate. Likewise, bullying or teasing also hinders students terribly from continuing their schooling. After our interviews and discussions, one student secretly confessed that dropping out was because he was called “biggums” (referring to his body size). However, these problems are not specific or unique to the Philippines but are

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<sup>9</sup> We can also understand that the lack of interest or feelings of laziness are potentially connected to the burgeoning attention given to non-cognitive skills in learning.

universal.

### B. *Parents' Reactions to their sons' Dropouts*

We then listened to their parents' reactions to school dropouts. Some students had indicated that "mother got angry," (I was) "scolded by [my] parents," (I was) "reprimanded by [my] parents," or (my) "parents got angry." Some parents reacted by saying "*paumanhin* (deep excuses)," <sup>10</sup> or that they felt sorry. These statements correspond only to the cases where parents could no longer afford to keep sending their son to school. However, what is noteworthy here is that some students referred to their parents as having said "nothing special" on the occasion. Although the students themselves could not fully understand why their parents responded in this way when their children dropped out of school, the school teacher suggested that it is possible that parents are unconcerned with their children's schooling, and even perhaps on how they act more generally.

While it is difficult to pursue empirical evidence of such parents' attitude of non-involvement in regard to their children, it is crucially important at the same time as it implies the parents' lack of capacity to monitor their children. With such parents, children will have a much greater difficulty in making every decision on their own.

### C. *How and why they finally managed to return to school*

#### 1. Awakening

Eventually, the students referred to their reasons and motivations for finally managing to return to school. One student recalled a previous time when he was playing with his *barkada* and realized that such *barakada*-ship is "a waste of time." He continuously expressed that he eventually became "*fed-up na*" (became fed up) and "*nag-sawa ako*" (tired of it). In listening to these statements, other students also added that joining in and hanging around with the *barkada* involves costs such as buying

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<sup>10</sup> In local expressions, to the best of this author's knowledge, the term "*paumanhin*" is a deeper and more serious word in excusing and apologizing. In the broader usage, the weaker excusing words include "*sori*" (sorry), "*pasensya*" (literally, patient), and "*patawad*" (apologies). Parents seem to have expressed their deep apologies as a result of requiring that their son leave schools.

alcohol and cigarettes. They also expressed their emerging concerns toward the future pessimistically, “what if [they] continued staying out of schools and such *barkada*-ship.” At a certain point, they recognized the negative impact(s) on their future of having dropped out.

While more literature has relatively been approaching the reasons of not attending school so far, an intriguing point in our observation in School A is that the informants were composed of not only “not attending” but also “returned” students. Not only the senior age group (e.g., 17 or 18) are represented but also the younger students, such as those aged 13. Their histories eloquently tell us of the boys’ potential to realize what is good and what is bad for their futures.

## 2. The social significance of *barakda*-ship

Not only the eight students, but the local people report that boys are prone to play in their *barkada* to the extent that *barkada*-ship has the potential to keep them away from education. This observation is also reported by the empirical literature (e.g., Bouis et al. 1998). In an ethnographic survey conducted as a part of longitudinal panel data collection in the Province of Bukidnon, Northern Mindanao (Region X), Bouis et al. (1998) described local parental perceptions of strong associations between boys and *barkada*. Although beyond the direct scope in this study, it is essential to try to understand the social significance and role of *barkada*-ship. According to Takahashi (1972: 197), the *barkada* is part of a “primary group” in Philippine society whereby Filipino people place high value on *tayo-tayoism*. The term “*tayo*” literally means “we” in English, the first-person plural. Unlike English, the Filipino language distinguishes the first-person plural through using two categories—one is “*tayo*,” which includes the second person(s) and “*kami*,” which excludes the second person(s); this implies that Filipinos are already keenly sensitive to distinguish who are insiders—us (“*tayo*”)—and who are outsiders. The importance of keeping a good *barkada*-ship may also reflect this idea. Takahashi (1972) explained that the solidarity and affection within one’s own attribution group plays a crucial role over the norms of group. Aside from *barkada*, the *kapitbahay* (neighborhood) also plays a key role based on direct face-to-face communications in such primary groups.

It is noteworthy that some students, who were absorbed in playing in their *barkada*, eventually became aware of its negative impact on their future through the lens of education. Yet, as Takahashi (1972) explained, the *barkada* is not necessarily linked to vice as such. In the value system of the Philippines, the *barkada* is treated as a means of harmonizing human relations and as the fundamental basis of social networks that individuals would acquire. In considering the relation to school education, the *barkada*-ship seems to frequently have been reported as a harmful factor undermining education. However, it could have a positive character as a local social network expands among Filipino individuals. The significance of the *barkada*-ship in enhancing educational attainment is a topic requiring further study.

#### IV. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSIONS

This study investigated male students who had dropped out of a high school in Antique, Western Visayas, and interviewed teachers and adults as well. Through discussions with them, an image of Filipino boys lagging behind their female counterparts in education reconfirmed results in the literature (King and Hill 1998; Miralao 2008; UNGEI 2012; Yamauchi and Tiongo 2013). Economic deprivation was a crucial factor. Some teachers in an elementary school on the same site also stated that in agricultural/rural settings, boys would be expected to help their family more than girls by contributing to the family's livelihood. Yet, labor and education have an ambivalent relationship. While starting work at a young age is regarded as child labor, there may be a possibility that in these settings some adults (parents and even school teachers) accept the norm that boys should help their families by working outside the home once they are physically capable. Non-cognitive skills also matter (Heckman 2013; Sachs 2015), as such skills determine whether boys continue to find it interesting or necessary to study in school. Otherwise, these youths are prone to losing interest in attending school.

The peer group, *barkada*, is also frequently cited as a key factor undermining school education. The *barkada*-ship is here interpreted as a social network that expands horizontally. In rural settings, the computer-game shop may have a strong power to appeal to the youth. As Bouis et al. (1998) stated that parents report on the laziness of

boys compared to girls, these factors may foster attitudes related to the “laziness” of boys. Some school data provided by School A, although neither representative nor of sufficient size, also support this proposition.

However, the male students participating in our study eloquently exhibited some examples of the invertible nature of the school dropout problem. While those students also reported having suffered from similar hindrances and obstacles to those noted above, they finally managed to make a decision to return to school. We can interpret this as an instance of their “resilience.”

So far, the dropout problems have been regarded as “irreversible”; once students drop out of school or left school, we may tend to regard that they will no longer be able to recover their history of formal education easily somewhere outside of the contemporary formal education system unless on life-learning system or nonformal education. Yet they showed their resilient attitude by continuing to consider what role the school plays in their future. Some became fed up and eventually found the time spent with their *barkada* to be a waste of time. They came to care once again about their own lives and future.

The data on male students illustrated here by this study provide another viewpoint from which to see Filipino boys as resilient, and capable of recovery. We have yet to study and understand which backgrounds will factor into their decisions to return to school and potentially mitigate the gap caused by boys’ so-called underperformance. To reconstruct a framework for better understanding Filipino boys in education, our continued willingness to undertake empirical studies is essential. In particular, we are yet to identify when, and under what conditions, the existence of such forward-looking attitudes is enhanced.

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**Table1. Global Gender Gap Index: Top 10**

Rank	2014		2015		2016	
	Country	Score	Country	Score	Country	Score
1	Iceland	0.8594	Iceland	0.881	Iceland	0.874
2	Finland	0.8453	Norway	0.850	Finland	0.845
3	Norway	0.8374	Finland	0.850	Norway	0.842
4	Sweden	0.8165	Sweden	0.823	Sweden	0.815
5	Denmark	0.8025	Ireland	0.807	Rwanda	0.800
6	Nicaragua	0.7894	Rwanda	0.794	Ireland	0.797
7	Rwanda	0.7854	<b>Philippines</b>	<b>0.790</b>	<b>Philippines</b>	<b>0.786</b>
8	Ireland	0.7850	Switzerland	0.785	Slovenia	0.786
9	<b>Philippines</b>	<b>0.7814</b>	Slovenia	0.784	New Zealand	0.781
10	Belgium	0.7809	New Zealand	0.782	Nicaragua	0.780

Note: In the 2014 column, figures are reported in five digits while other years are reported in four.

Source: World Economic Forum (<http://reports.weforum.org/>).

**Table 2. Gender Gap on Economic, Education, and Health Indices of the Philippines (2016)**

Indices	Rank	Score	World Average	Female	Male	Female/ Male
<b>Economic Activity:</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>0.780</b>	<b>0.586</b>			<b>0.78</b>
Labor force participation	107	0.648	0.665	52	81	0.65
Wage rate equality	7	0.798	0.622	—	—	0.80
Earned income (US\$, PPP)	31	0.692	0.502	5,691	8,223	0.69
Congress people	5	0.871	0.358	47	53	0.87
Professionals	1	1.000	0.862	61	39	1.60
<b>Education:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.000</b>	<b>0.955</b>			<b>1.00</b>
Literacy rate	1	1.000	0.897	97	96	1.01
Elementary enrolment	1	1.000	0.980	98	94	1.04
Secondary enrolment	1	1.000	0.970	74	62	1.19
Tertiary enrolment	1	1.000	0.930	40	31	1.28
<b>Health and Survival</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.980</b>	<b>0.957</b>			<b>0.98</b>
Birth sex ratio	1	0.944	0.918	—	—	0.95
Life expectancy	1	1.060	1.043	63	57	1.11

Source: *Country Score Card—Philippines*, World Economic Forum

(<http://reports.weforum.org/feature-demonstration/files/2016/10/PHL.pdf>).

**Table 3. School A's Enrolment Data (head count by sex)**

	SY 2011– 12	SY 2012– 13	SY 2013– 14	SY 2014– 15	SY 2015– 16
Males	244	277	271	270	285
Females	218	247	280	297	287
Total	452	524	551	567	572

Source: Provided by School A on request.

**Table 4. Number of Dropouts for the Last Four School Years, School A (by sex)**

	SY 2012–13			SY 2013–14			Y 2014–15			SY 2015–16		
	M	F	Both	M	F	Both	M	F	Both	M	F	Both
Grade 7	4	1	5	1	3	4	5	0	5	1	0	1
Grade 8	6	1	7	4	0	4	7	0	7	0	0	0
Grade 9	2	1	3	2	0	2	3	0	3	0	0	0
Grade 10	4	1	5	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total in number	16	4	20	8	3	11	15	0	15	2	0	2
(in %)	(80)	(20)	(100)	(73)	(27)	(100)	(100)	(0)	(100)	(100)	(0)	(100)

Notes: 1. “M” refers to “Male” and “F” to “Female.”

2. Grade 7 refers to the first grade in high school.

Source: Provided by School A on request.

**Table 5. Promotion Rates and Failure Rates, School A (by sex)**

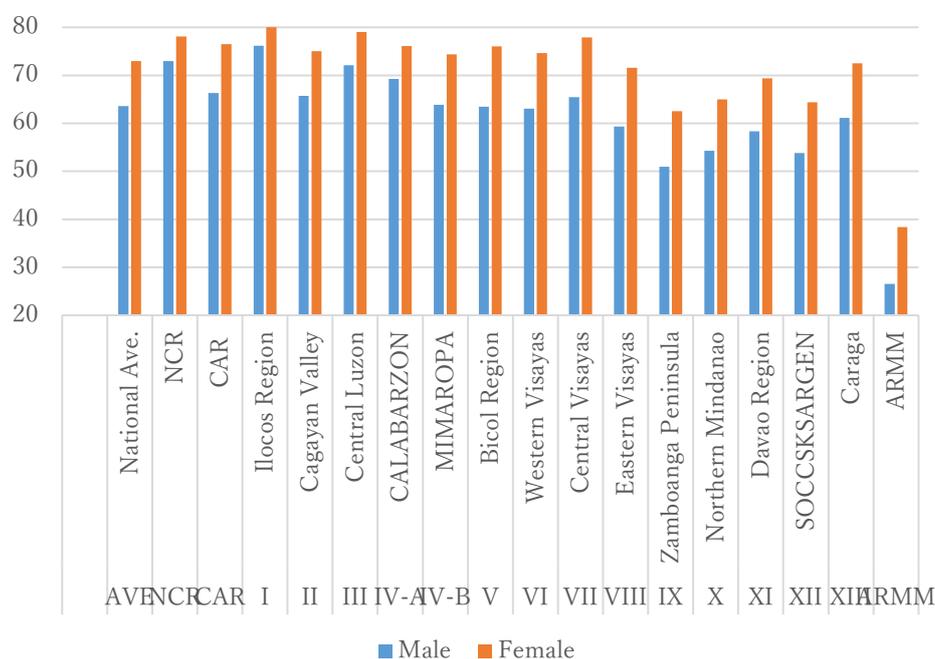
	SY 2014–15						SY 2015–16					
	Promotion Rate			Failure Rate			Promotion Rate			Failure Rate		
	M	F	Both	M	F	Both	M	F	Both	M	F	Both
Grade 7	92	100	97	8	0	3.4	87	98	93	12.6	0	7.2
Grade 8	92	100	96	8	0	4	91	99	95	9	1	5
Grade 9	95	100	98	5	0	2.4	95	97	94	5	3	4
Grade 10	100	100	100	0	0	0	98	98	98	1	1	2

Notes: 1. “M” refers to “Male” and “F” to “Female.”

2. Grade 7 refers to the first grade in high school.

Source: Provided by School A on request.

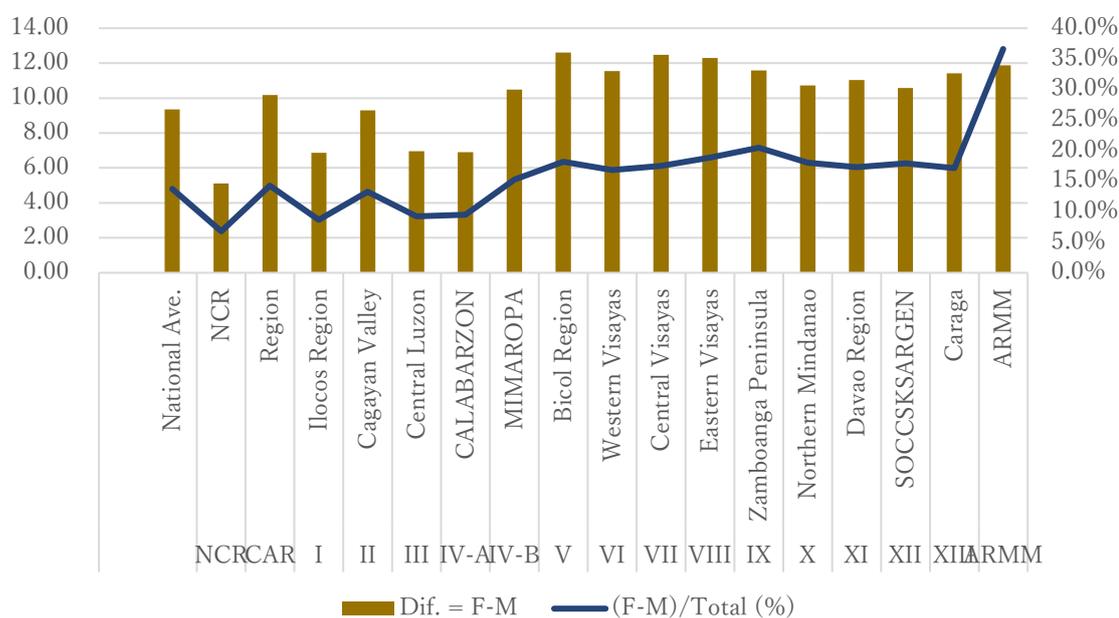
**Figure 1. Net Enrolment Rate in Public and Private Secondary Level Schools  
(2012)**



Notes: NCR = National Capital Region (referring to Metro Manila); CAR = Cordillera Administrative Region; CALABARZON = Cavite–Laguna–Batangas–Rizal–Quezon; MIMAROPA = Mindoro–Marinduque–Romblon–Palawan; SOCCSKSARGEN = South Cotabato–Cotabato City–North Cotabato–Sultan Kudarat–Sarangani–General Santos City; ARMM = Aeronomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Source: 2017 Philippine Statistical Yearbook, Philippine Statistics Authority.

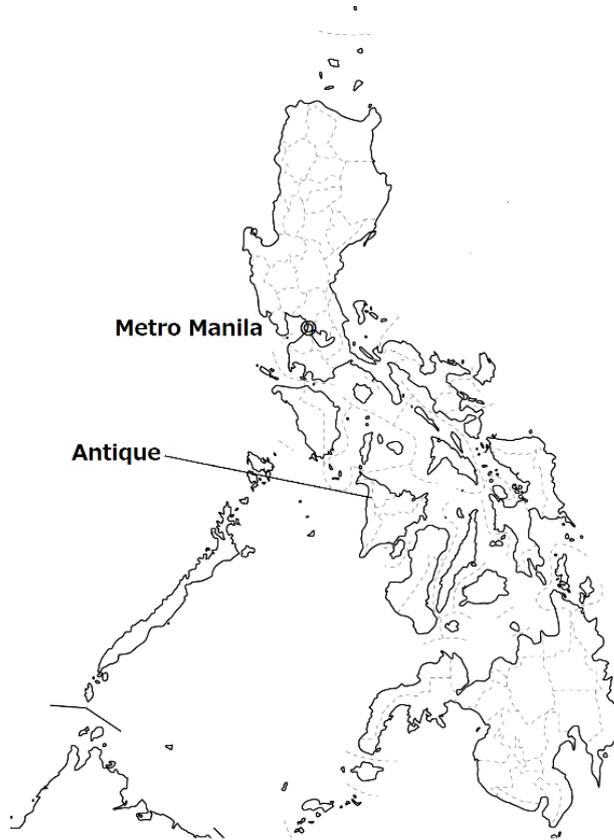
**Figure 2. Gender Gap Disaggregation of Net Enrolment Rates in Public and Private Secondary Level Schools (2012)**



Notes: NCR = National Capital Region (referring to Metro Manila); CAR = Cordillera Administrative Region; CALABARZON = Cavite–Laguna–Batangas–Rizal–Quezon; MIMAROPA = Mindoro–Marinduque–Romblon–Palawan; SOCCSKSARGEN = South Cotabato–Cotabato City–North Cotabato–Sultan Kudarat–Sarangani–General Santos City; ARMM = Aunomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Source: 2017 Philippine Statistical Yearbook, Philippine Statistics Authority.

**Figure 3. PHILIPPINES MAP**



Source: Adapted from <http://www.freemap.jp><sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The author would like to thank “Free Map” (*Sankakkei*) for their free provision of map.