

Grit, Loneliness, Academic Performance, and Self-Concept of High School Students with OFW Parents

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Abstract. This study examined grit, loneliness, academic performance, and self-concept among high school students with Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) parents at Fatima National High School in General Santos City. Using a descriptive-correlational design, data were gathered from 133 students through a survey and supplemented by semi-structured interviews with eight respondents. Findings showed very high levels of grit ($M = 3.478$, $SD = 0.070$), low levels of loneliness ($M = 2.397$, $SD = 0.095$), and high levels of academic performance ($M = 2.975$, $SD = 0.061$) and self-concept ($M = 3.220$, $SD = 0.093$). Correlation analysis revealed a weak negative relationship between grit and loneliness ($r(131) = -0.314$, $p < .001$), a moderate positive relationship between grit and academic performance ($r(131) = 0.457$, $p < .001$), and a weak negative relationship between loneliness and self-concept ($r(131) = -0.232$, $p = .007$). Qualitative data highlighted students' resilience and acceptance of their situation as children of OFW parents. These results suggest that grit helps students manage loneliness and achieve academic success despite their circumstances. The weak negative correlation between loneliness and self-concept indicates that improving self-perception could enhance overall well-being. The study recommends implementing a comprehensive psychosocial intervention program to address the challenges faced by these students effectively.

Keywords: Academic performance; Grit; High school students; Loneliness; OFW parent; Philippines; Psychosocial intervention program; Self-concept.

1.0 Introduction

The absence of a parent significantly affects a student's growth and development. Several studies indicated that parental involvement is linked to better life outcomes, academic achievement, and emotional support, which positively impact students' mental health and performance (Baig et al., 2021; Casey, 2022; Liu et al., 2020; Rogers et al., 2022). However, many students, particularly in the Philippines, experience inconsistent parental presence due to parents working abroad as Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). This situation raises concerns for high school students with migrant worker parents, who may face lower self-concepts and heightened feelings of isolation during critical developmental years (Abenir, 2019; Chai, 2019; Liu et al., 2010). As these students continue to pursue their education, exploring the nuances of their circumstances can help assess the factors that contribute to their challenges.

A psychological factor that is commonly associated with conquering difficulties is grit. In the context of students, grit involves persistently pursuing and sustaining one's academic endeavors despite any complex or lengthy processes involved. Several studies have linked grit with educational productivity, engagement, motivation, and achievement, highlighting the significant role of perseverance and consistency of interest for

long-term goals in academic success (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014; Hodge et al., 2017; Luthans et al., 2018; Pate et al., 2017). Thus, as previous research suggests, fostering grit in high school students with OFW parents may influence academic outcomes and motivation.

In the context of having OFW parents, students often experience a deep sense of loneliness beyond physical absence. Despite the financial support provided by their parents working abroad, students with OFW parents feel lonely and abandoned due to the lack of parental connection they desire to have (Unay & Villosino, 2023; Valdehuesa-Mahilum, 2013). Moreover, high school students with OFW parents often face challenges in developing their social skills, making navigating the school environment challenging (Fatima et al., 2021). Therefore, as these studies reveal that the absence of parental involvement is associated with experiencing feelings of loneliness, this study can explore whether it can cause negative impacts on high school students' mental and emotional health.

Moreover, examining academic performance can help assess educational progress. Fu et al. (2017) have provided evidence that parenting without constant presence significantly determines academic success. Research has also shown that students with OFW parents have their overall academic performance affected by the challenges brought upon by their circumstances (Ramos, 2019; Taola et al., 2024). Examining their present condition may aid in comprehending how specific psychological factors affect their academic performance.

Further, developing one's self-concept is one of the tools for navigating the complexities of personal identity, inevitably influencing an individual's life outcomes. For young people, it is essential to develop a positive self-concept, which is influenced by the behavior of people in their environment and their existing support systems (Luton, as cited in Lodi-Smith & Crocetti, 2018). Some studies identified the significant impact of parental influence on a child's self-concept, recognizing them as a crucial source of support for psychological development (Brown et al., 2009; Krauss & Orth, 2020). For high school students facing parental absence, gaining insights into the role of self-concept could reveal its influence in navigating their lives thus far.

Parental labor migration is common in the Philippines, as working overseas has long been established. Although there are no exact data on the number of children with OFW parents, estimates suggest that around 10% of Filipino children have at least one OFW parent (Bryant, 2005, as cited in Bernardo et al., 2018). As these data showcase the prevalence of children having OFW parents in the country, various studies have explored their challenges and lived experiences (Calantas & Lobaton, 2018; Caño et al., 2016; Sealmoy & Marañon, 2020). Despite this, there is a lack of investigation into the specific measures of grit, loneliness, academic performance, and self-concept, particularly in General Santos City. With this in mind, this study aimed to supplement the related literature.

As schools strive to develop well-rounded individuals, it is essential to address the needs of all students, including those with OFW parents. Tarroja and Fernando (2013) emphasized the importance of providing psychological support for children of OFWs in the Philippines, highlighting the necessity for schools to assist these students. Similarly, a scoping review by Dominguez and Hall (2022) identified significant gaps in psychosocial and educational interventions for this demographic, urging community organizations to implement effective support strategies. This study aims to assess the circumstances of high school students with OFW parents by examining their grit, loneliness, academic performance, self-concept levels, and how these factors interact. The findings may inform solutions that enhance their overall well-being and educational success.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design, supplemented with qualitative data through interviews. Quantitative research entailed examining and collecting numerical data to reveal patterns, determine means, assess correlations, and draw comprehensive conclusions (Fleetwood, 2023a). Through this, the study could generalize data and summarize it to represent the participants through descriptive analysis. Moreover, descriptive-correlational was a form of descriptive, non-experimental research wherein two or more variables were measured, outlining the phenomenon and its attributes while examining the statistical association between them (Curtis et al., 2016; Fleetwood, 2023b; McCombes, 2020). Applying this

research design allowed the researchers to analyze the existing relationships of the variables, such as the relationship between grit and academic performance, grit and loneliness, and loneliness and self-concept.

The chosen research design was utilized because the study intended to identify the grit, loneliness, academic performance, and self-concept levels of high school students with OFW parents. Furthermore, supplementing the data through a qualitative approach provided more opportunities for the research study, expanding its implications and providing more understanding (Benzing et al., 2020). By including a qualitative approach, results could be presented with more dimension, which opened further discussion of the findings and improved the strategies and intervention programs suited for high school students with OFW parents.

2.2 Research Participants

This study utilized simple random sampling to select the sample of respondents included in the quantitative survey. Simple random sampling was a probability sampling method that involved randomly selecting the sample through specified methods and collecting data from that chosen sample (Thomas, 2020). This method allowed everyone in the population an equal chance to be selected. Thus, it was known to display high internal and external validity depending on the response rate of the selected participants (Simkus, 2022). Through a pre-survey conducted before the actual conduct and assessing the population of students, a total of 133 high school students from Fatima National High School (FNHS) who matched the inclusion criteria of having OFW parents, qualified and served as the study's respondents.

In addition, purposive sampling was used to select participants for individual semi-structured interviews to supplement the survey with qualitative data and provide a deeper assessment of the results. This involved selecting eight (8) participants who met the following criteria based on their survey questionnaire scores on each variable: for grit, loneliness, academic performance, and self-concept, students with the highest and lowest mean scores in the respective variables were selected. Thus, each variable had two (2) interviewed participants. The purpose of having interviews with selected participants was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and perspectives within the studied population who could meet the specific criteria in the measured variables of this study.

The study included male and female high school students from Fatima National High School in Barangay Fatima, General Santos City, enrolled in the academic year 2024-2025. Aside from its strategic location and reputation as a known secondary public school in the city (Fatima National High School, 2024), the aforementioned school had the latest information on having a population of high school students with OFW parents, which was currently inaccessible from other public schools within the city. Additionally, the respondents had to be between 12 and 17 years of age, as this corresponded to the age range of adolescents, which was another characteristic of the population that this study aimed to investigate (Macha et al., 2018; Jaworska & MacQueen, 2015). Participants had to currently identify as children of OFWs, regardless of whether it was their mother, father, or both parents still working overseas. By selecting participants from this specific institution, the study minimized the influence of external factors that could skew results and provided relevant findings about the target demographic.

This study also applied exclusions when selecting participants to ensure consistency in the data to be collected. High school students outside FNHS were excluded since the locale was limited to only this specific school. Moreover, high school students whose parents were OFWs but were not currently working at the time of the study's conduct were excluded. These exclusions were applied to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the acquired results.

2.3 Research Instrument

The primary assessment tool utilized for the study was a researcher-made survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire includes five: one (1) section for the demographic profile of the respondents solely for confirming if they met the inclusion criteria, and four (4) sections for each variable to measure the levels of grit, loneliness, academic performance, and self-concept, which contained a total of 40 items. These sections employed a 4-point Likert-type scale to measure the responses in each item. This scale offered four options for responses to a statement or question, allowing them to express their degree of agreement. Moreover, this type of Likert scale enabled the researchers to have four points to choose from without a neutral response. Hence, clearer responses

toward the given statement were acquired. The scale was measured with the legend: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. In determining the range for every interpretation scale utilized in the variables, the researchers followed Pimentel's (2019) suggestion for scale interpretation in a 4-point Likert-type scale, which was to apply a uniform difference in the range's interval, as this promoted greater equilibrium, balanced observations, and better interpretation labeling.

The first part of the questionnaire was a demographic information survey to identify the respondent's age and which high school they attended, which were included in the inclusion criteria. The demographic profile was only used to confirm the participants' actual meeting of the inclusion criteria. Data acquired from this part was not used to present or assess results. For the second part of the questionnaire, which is dedicated to measuring the level of grit, the researchers developed ten (10) statements to assess how much a respondent agreed or disagreed with statements about perseverance and passion for their long-term goals in the general context. For the third part of the questionnaire, which measures the level of loneliness, eight (8) statements specifically investigate the respondent's feelings of social isolation and disconnectedness, exploring related experiences of emotional emptiness, lack of companionship, and perceived social isolation. Some statements consider loneliness in the context of parental absence. For academic performance, the fourth part of the questionnaire, the researchers prepared ten (10) statements to determine how much a respondent would identify with statements about their achievements, abilities, and engagement in school. Notably, the evaluation was solely focused on overall academic performance. For the fifth part of the questionnaire, which assessed the respondent's self-concept, the researchers also provided ten (10) statements that measured the respondent's agreement or disagreement with various aspects and attitudes toward themselves. A higher total score suggested a more positive self-concept, indicating greater confidence and self-worth across different areas of the respondent's life.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

To conduct this study successfully, the researchers followed an organized structure of the necessary procedures. First, a signed approval for the study's conduct was acquired from the set of panelists and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Second, the researchers created the questions for the instruments based on the measured variables. The questions in the researcher-made survey questionnaire consisted of statements that measured the participants' level of grit, loneliness, academic performance, and self-concept based on the related literature and studies. Moreover, the interview guide for the supplementary data was created based on the survey questions and formatted to be appropriate for a semi-structured interview.

Third, after creating the research instruments, they underwent a validation process by experts in psychology and assessment. Specifically, the instruments were approved and examined by three (3) selected experts in the field: two (2) registered psychologists and one (1) registered psychometrician. Their review thoroughly assessed every statement in the survey questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide according to the measured variables. Furthermore, a Master Teacher with a Filipino major validated the translated questionnaire from English to Cebuano. For the interview guide, a deemed expert in qualitative studies corrected and validated its contents to be suitable for the study's goals.

Fourth, following the validation of the questionnaire's construct and translation, pilot testing for the survey questionnaire was conducted in Notre Dame of Dadiangas University, General Santos City, with informed consent from participants of similar characteristics. Specifically, this was conducted with 30 selected senior high school students who were also children of OFWs and were not part of the study's sample. After successful pilot testing, a statistician analyzed the reliability and internal consistency of the research instrument by calculating the Cronbach Alpha (α), considering the minimum acceptable value of 0.7. Values lower than this were considered insufficient for consistency and reliability (Howard, 2016). The Cronbach Alpha acquired from each part of the questionnaire was as follows: for grit, an alpha of 0.73, for loneliness, an alpha of 0.87, for academic performance, an alpha of 0.87, and for self-concept, an alpha of 0.84. Therefore, all parts of the questionnaire were accepted.

Fifth, the study was conducted once the research instrument was deemed internally consistent and reliable. The researchers ensured the approval and cooperation of Fatima National High School by communicating the study's objectives to the school's administration before starting the survey. Informed consent and assent were given to the identified respondents through the assistance of the school. This was done to ensure the survey was

conducted securely and with the participants' authorization. They were informed about the purpose of the entire study, with assurance that their identities would remain anonymous and that the data gathered would be used in the study. Those who approved their participation were given printed survey questionnaires and 20 minutes to answer in an appropriate room within the school. Data from this survey were gathered and analyzed, and then used to conduct semi-structured interviews. Selected participants from the given criteria were interviewed to supplement the quantitative results.

Lastly, data collected from the survey were interpreted using statistical tools for data analysis. Furthermore, qualitative interview data were transcribed and assessed, including only relevant answers in the discussion to supplement quantitative findings.

2.5 Data Analysis

The researchers interpreted the collected data using appropriate statistical tools for the study's objectives. These tools are descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage, as well as Pearson's r correlation, to determine the relationships of the variables. The researchers used frequency to determine the number of times specific values occurred in the data. Frequency distribution showcased a visual representation of the observations in a particular dataset collected in a sample (Young, 2022). The researchers used this to present the distribution of the high school students' grit, loneliness, academic performance, and self-concept levels.

To effectively present and compare results, percentages were used. Using percentages involves inspecting, narrowing, transforming, and modeling information from extensive data (Unacademy, 2022). The researchers used this to present the proportion of high school students experiencing different grit levels, loneliness, academic performance, and self-concept. A standardized comparison between the responses was presented and interpreted easily by expressing their proportions as percentages. The mean was collected from their scores to measure the high school students' grit, loneliness, academic performance, and self-concept levels. According to Hurley and Tenny (2023), the mean represents the sum of values divided by the number of values in the sample. The mean scores were also used to determine the selection of participants for interviews, as those with higher and lower scores than the mean in the variables were selected for the supplementary qualitative data. The standard deviation was used to measure the extent of the variance in the data. It showed how much the values in a sample differed from the average value (Choubey, 2022). This particular statistical tool determined the variation of the data set in the population sample of children with OFW parents through the participants' mean scores in their levels of grit, loneliness, academic performance, and self-concept to present the existing deviations. By doing so, a more complete picture of the results was gained since the shape of the distribution and the degree of variation were determined.

Since the relationship between the study variables was determined, the researchers calculated the Pearson correlation coefficient (Pearson- r) between the selected variables. This tool assessed the relationship and indicated the correlation between -1 and 1. A value nearer to zero indicated a weaker correlation, whereas a strong correlation was observed if the value was nearer to 1. This determined the direction of the relationship between the selected variables. This also assessed whether the relationship of the two variables was strong or weak (Nickolas, 2023). For the interpretation of the relationships between the two variables using Pearson's r levels of correlation, according to Evans (1996), these values signify the two variables' strength and kind of relationship. When the value is positive, it signifies a positive relationship between the two variables. If it is negative, it indicates a negative relationship. These relationships, whether positive or negative, can be of differing strengths. Values in the range of 0.01-0.19, regardless of negative or positive, indicate a very weak correlation. It indicates a weak correlation if it is in the range of 0.20-0.39. If it is within 0.40-0.59, it signifies a moderate correlation. Meanwhile, values within 0.60-0.79 indicate a strong correlation. Lastly, if it is a value in the range of 0.80-1.00, it indicates a robust correlation between the two variables.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Anonymity stood as an essential component in ethical research practices. It ensured respondent privacy and fostered trust in research and its processes. Researchers adopted a meticulous approach to data collection and dissemination, adhering to ethical guidelines provided by institutions and regulatory bodies such as Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) (American Psychological Association, 2017). Researchers eliminated

individual identities while facilitating meaningful analysis (Marks, 2023). In this study, ensuring the safekeeping of the administered answers and the survey questions was prioritized, along with employing techniques and strategies such as coding each participant to represent a number and using pseudonyms to ensure that the participants' names were protected, removing any identifying information when presenting data in the discussion, and combining data to represent the whole sample.

Informed consent allowed participants to decide and approve their involvement in research practices while building trust between researchers and participants. By providing transparent and comprehensive information, researchers allowed participants to understand the potential risks and benefits of participation, the nature of the research, and their right to withdraw at any point (Kadam, 2017). In this study, the informed consent form outlined all relevant aspects of the research, including the purpose, methodology, potential risks and benefits, and procedures for safeguarding the confidentiality of participants. Along with informed consent, informed assent was utilized before the data gathering since the study involved minors (Hein et al., 2015). Participants were allowed to ask questions and receive clarification before signing the consent form, and they always had the right to withdraw at any point during the study. Furthermore, any new information or changes to the protocol as the research progressed were updated for the participants.

Confidentiality is a fundamental ethical principle across various professional domains, including research, wherein data is disclosed for gathering information and acquiring results (American Psychological Association, 2017). If identities are revealed, research participation might lead to discrimination, legal repercussions, or social stigma in specific contexts. Maintaining confidentiality protects participants from these risks (Drolet et al., 2022). Protecting the participants is imperative when it comes to research, as this establishes the avoidance of exploitation. Researchers must rigorously uphold the confidentiality of all information obtained from respondents and utilized in the study.

Furthermore, in the Philippines, the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173) protects personal information in data sharing. In this study, establishing confidentiality was the utmost priority for the researchers. Information gathered from the participants remained private and protected and was only used to achieve its goals and answer its questions.

3.0 Results and Discussion

In this section, the researchers comprehensively explained and discussed the study's data and key findings to offer the readers valuable insights and information. The researchers incorporated tables to enhance understanding and illustrate significant data. Additionally, the textual analysis offered a detailed examination of the results, connecting them to the research questions and highlighting their implications for future practice.

3.1 Level of Grit

Table 1 presents the level of grit among high school students with OFW Parents, as displayed in the succeeding page. The grand mean score revealed a very high level of grit among the respondents ($M = 3.478$, $SD = 0.070$). This indicates that the students are strongly committed to achieving their goals, demonstrating perseverance and dedication in facing difficulties.

Table 1. *Level of Grit among High School Students with OFW parents*

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation	SD
1. I devote my energy to exerting efforts for my tasks.	3.534	Very High	0.516
2. I dedicate time to finishing my school projects.	3.436	Very High	0.513
3. I do not give up easily when things get difficult.	3.466	Very High	0.610
4. I am willing to push myself out of my comfort zone.	3.023	High	0.690
5. I believe that all of my goals are important.	3.752	Very High	0.451
6. I have the capability to achieve my long-term goals.	3.549	Very High	0.514
7. I am able to adjust my strategies when my initial approach is not working.	3.278	High	0.513
8. I am pushed to persevere by my eagerness to learn.	3.654	Very High	0.493
9. I use my failures as motivations to continue.	3.602	Very High	0.507
10. I can stay focused and committed to my goals, even when progress is slow.	3.489	Very High	0.585
Grand Mean	3.478	Very High	0.070

Legend for verbal interpretation of mean: 1.00-1.75 = very low, 1.76-2.51 = low, 2.52-3.27 = high, 3.28-4.00 = very high

The statement *"I believe that all of my goals are important"* garnered the highest mean score of 3.752 ($SD = 0.451$). This shows that most respondents share the same attribute of perceiving their current aspirations as important.

This is evident in some of the statements provided by the students during their interviews when asked about their goals:

"Just like that... to finish my studies and afterwards... to work in the U.S. to repay my parents... that is all I dream of. I am just planning the goals in life that I need... I need not make mistakes now and not fail because I am terrified of failing even for just one year. After all, it would be a waste. Maybe that is why. I am afraid of failing, which is why I keep pushing myself." [A01, lines 60-62, 82-86]

Meanwhile, some students also acknowledge the hard work of their parents, which drives them to dedicate themselves to their endeavors.

"You should be encouraged because you feel sorry for your mom. You should strive for something so your mom will be happy with you, since she is also working hard." [C02, lines 719-723]

Another student recognizes their own capability of handling life challenges because they are accustomed to them, further implying the development of grit due to exposure to difficult situations.

"I tell myself I must finish this because I only have myself... I see myself as capable because I am used to being alone without help." [A01, lines 45-46, 51-52]

The level of grit among the high school students with OFW parents was revealed to be very high, as supported by previous studies. As Catembung et al. (2023) also highlighted in their study, students with OFW or migrant parents had good levels of controlling stress, independence, and capacity to deal with their emotions, all characteristics of intense grit. This relates to Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1969), which implies that primary caregivers influence their children's reliance on them. In this case, as the students grow without their parents' presence for an extended period, they become more resilient in facing challenges independently, contributing to a high level of grit.

This is evidenced by their ability to dedicate themselves to a goal, even when faced with difficult circumstances. As the results showed, most of the students agreed that all of their goals are important, signifying their acknowledgement of having significant goals to acquire. Fostering goal commitment, especially in adolescent high school students, has enhanced their grit and engagement (Tang et al., 2019). Moreover, their distance from their parents can lead to an increased sense of responsibility among these students, compelling them to develop self-discipline and perseverance in pursuit of their aspirations.

Aside from this, the results also showed that although the students have a very high level of grit, some statements notably acquired a lesser level of agreement, such as the willingness to step outside their comfort zone. As some studies suggest, although children with OFW parents can develop agency and resiliency in their circumstances, instabilities in their confidence and willingness to take risks may still develop, as they may prioritize familiarity and stability (Lam & Yeoh, 2019; Zhao et al., 2018). These findings further display how the experiences of high school students with OFW parents shape their development of grit in varying ways.

3.2 Level of Loneliness

Table 2 analyses the levels of loneliness experienced by high school students with OFW parents. The data reveal that, overall, these students exhibit a low level of loneliness, with a grand mean of 2.397 (SD = 0.095). This implies that the respondents may occasionally feel a lack of social connection, and some social relations may not match their set expectations, but not substantially. Although the reflected level is low, a closer evaluation of the individual items reveals a more complex picture. For instance, a significant distribution of students reported feeling misunderstood despite being surrounded by peers, as indicated by the high mean score of 2.677 (SD = 0.849) with the statement *"People surround me but I feel misunderstood"*. This suggests that while these students may be physically present in social settings, they may not feel truly connected or understood.

Table 2. *Level of Loneliness among High School Students with OFW parents*

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation	SD
1. I lack companionship from my classmates and peers.	2.338	Low	0.777
2. I feel left out of social activities at school.	2.203	Low	0.637
3. I struggle to find someone to open up to.	2.481	Low	0.942
4. I am surrounded by people but I feel misunderstood.	2.677	High	0.849
5. I do not belong to any group of friends.	1.992	Low	0.900
6. I feel that nobody sees the real me.	2.722	High	0.856
7. I find it difficult to form a deep, genuine connection with others.	2.481	Low	0.794
8. I am unhappy when I do things on my own.	2.278	Low	0.882
Grand Mean	2.397	Low	0.095

Legend for verbal interpretation of mean: 1.00-1.75 = very low, 1.76-2.51 = low, 2.52-3.27 = high, 3.28-4.00 = very high

Some students have expressed difficulty connecting with others, especially in opening up about their feelings to their parents.

"Ah...That, I feel ashamed, as if my difficulties are just small. I am shy towards them [parents], like I am ashamed to approach them like... Because it is not... ah, as ah... I grew up with my grandmother. So, I do not know anything about them [parents] because I did not grow up with them. So, that is why I am ashamed. What if they say, "Oh, this is how they raised me..." I do not know either." [B02, lines 462-463, 467-470]

A student expressed a similar difficulty with opening up about their problems due to fears of being misunderstood.

"I think, when I have a problem, I do not say it, although I want to tell it -- to my dad, because maybe my mom might tell me that I am OA [over-acting]. I do not want to open it because I feel like what if my dad will tell on me." [C01, 634-638]

Moreover, one of the students stated some other instances of loneliness, such as taking care of oneself and not having someone to rely on.

"It is difficult... Because you need to... take care of yourself because you were left with your father... and you need to be on your own, you have no one to rely on... because your sisters are also busy with other things... It is just difficult for me. Since elementary, you have had no one to rely on for assignments; you must figure out how to do it yourself... You have to think about how to accomplish it on your own." [A01, lines 22, 26-28, 39-41]

High School Students with OFW parents have been widely reported to feel loneliness to a great extent, as being away from their parents is considered to be one of the most common factors of loneliness (Karabanova & Poskrebysheva, 2013; Rafique et al., 2020; Tesfaw & Minaye, 2022; Vanhalst et al., 2013). However, in this study, results revealed a low level of loneliness among high school students with OFW parents, indicating that although they may occasionally feel a lack of social connection, they can still maintain social relations and interactions (Minocha et al., 2015). This is similar to a study by Benitez et al. (2024), stating that high school students with OFW parents may experience lower levels of loneliness than expected, despite the physical absence of their parents. This suggests that these students possess adaptability in their social lives, allowing them to navigate the challenges of parental absence while fostering meaningful connections.

The findings of this study also showed that the majority of the students felt belongingness in their peers, as the majority disagreed with the statement that expressed not belonging to any group of friends. This contradicts the findings of other studies, positing that one of the leading problems children with migrant parents face is communicating and sharing bonds with peers (Abdusamatov, 2023; Calantas & Lobaton, 2018). As several studies implied, relationships in social environments are crucial determinants in the psychosocial well-being of students with OFW parents (Tefaw & Minaye, 2022; Zhao et al., 2018). In this case, the students were able to form significant relationships that enabled them to acknowledge and perceive a positive connection with their peers. This discrepancy highlights the importance of supportive community and school environments that foster positive peer relationships, even in parental absence.

However, although the overall results revealed that the students had low levels of loneliness, areas still reflected high levels, such as feeling misunderstood despite being surrounded by people and feeling that nobody sees the

real them. Similar findings were acquired by Tarroja and Fernando (2013), stating that children left behind by migrant parents are more susceptible to increased feelings of longing for connection and understanding. Moreover, Distor and Campos (2021) also discussed in their research that being away from one's parents can significantly impact adolescents' social development and adjustments that lead to loneliness even when surrounded by others. This indicates that while these students may maintain social interactions, unmet emotional needs still contribute to their loneliness.

3.3 Level of Academic Performance

Table 3 displays the level of academic performance among high school students with OFW parents, as shown on the succeeding page. The grand mean score was identified as high ($M = 2.975$, $SD = 0.061$). This suggests that the respondents often exert effort in their academic endeavors and pursue high academic achievements. Further investigation revealed that possessing academic skills and consistently attending classes are the significant factors contributing to their academic performance, while presenting in front of the class contributes to the main challenges they face in their academics.

Table 3. *Level of Academic Performance among High School Students with OFW parents*

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation	SD
1. I am confident in sharing my ideas during class discussions.	2.925	High	0.765
2. I am capable of obtaining perfect scores in my tests.	2.594	High	0.749
3. I always submit my school works on time.	3.060	High	0.649
4. I include studying my lessons ahead of time in my daily schedule.	3.015	High	0.639
5. I am able to balance my school works with other responsibilities.	3.180	High	0.638
6. I strive to be always present in all of my classes.	3.459	Very High	0.609
7. I find it easy to present my work in front of the class.	2.564	High	0.762
8. I consistently achieve academic awards.	2.872	High	0.701
9. I have numerous opportunities because of my academic skills.	2.752	High	0.608
10. I am driven to continuously improve my academics skills.	3.331	Very High	0.671
Grand Mean	2.975	High	0.061

Legend for verbal interpretation of mean: 1.00-1.75 = very low, 1.76-2.51 = low, 2.52-3.27 = high, 3.28-4.00 = very high

Notably, the statement indicated in the table, *"I strive to be always present in all of my classes,"* gained a very high mean score of 3.459 ($SD = 0.609$). This suggests that high school students with OFW parents are motivated to commit to being present in their educational experiences. A respondent highlighted their experience of struggling in class but still pushing through listening because they deem it beneficial for them.

"For example, I feel sleepy but want to listen to what the teacher is discussing. I will force myself to listen. So that I can learn something... for example, Ma'am might have a quiz after the lesson and I would not know what to answer." [A02, lines 239-240, 244]

Another respondent recognizes they want to finish their education consistently and dedicate it to their OFW parent.

"I think that he [father] might have been an OFW because they did not have opportunities like this back then, he did not have a good education... So, I am telling myself, what if I stay consistent with my studies so that I can finish soon and still give him what he wants." [C01, lines 625-629]

The results acquired on the academic performance of the high school students with OFW parents suggest that they generally exert efforts in their academic pursuits to achieve high results. Many students emphasized the importance of being present in classes and continuously improving their academic skills. Additionally, interview excerpts from the students revealed that they primarily want to strive in class as they recognize this to be beneficial for themselves and their parents working abroad. This result is supported by multiple studies conducted among students with OFW parents, revealing that students strive to improve their academic skills and maintain a strong commitment to their education as a way to give back to their parents' sacrifices (Dialde, 2023; Navarez & Diaz, 2017; Pajarillo-Aquino, 2019; Taola et al., 2024; Unay & Villosino, 2023). The acquired results highlight how the students have developed a sense of responsibility towards their families, motivating them to excel academically despite the challenges of having an OFW parent.

Consequently, although they perform decently in their academic pursuits, a challenge identified by students with OFW parents in school is presenting their work in front of the class. This is supported by a study from Taola et al. (2024), which revealed that although the students displayed strong commitment to do well in their classes, they often struggle with communication and sharing their ideas. This finding was supported by Mania et al. (2024), wherein students with OFW parents often have high study anxiety, indicating that they generally feel worried about their education and performance in school, and signifying a lack of confidence in their abilities. With that being said, it can be seen that while these students are eager to succeed academically, they still face emotional and psychological challenges that need to be addressed to help them reach their full potential and improve their overall educational experience.

3.4 Level of Self-Concept

Table 4 presents the level of self-concept among high school students with OFW parents, as reflected in the previous page. The grand mean score implied a high level of self-concept (Mean = 3.220, SD = 0.093). This indicates that the respondents generally have a positive and realistic view of themselves, with a good understanding of their identity. Additionally, further investigation revealed that recognizing accomplishments and accepting themselves are the significant factors contributing to their self-concept. However, they face difficulties expressing their ideas and recognizing the unique qualities they can offer others.

Table 4. *Level of Self-Concept among High School Students with OFW parents*

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation	SD
1. I am content with the person I have become.	3.120	High	0.896
2. I feel comfortable and accepting of my physical appearance.	3.188	High	0.770
3. I trust myself to make important decisions.	3.135	High	0.726
4. I am proud of my accomplishments.	3.398	Very High	0.651
5. I believe I have valuable qualities to offer others.	3.060	High	0.637
6. I can openly express my personal values and perspectives on things with confidence.	3.053	High	0.710
7. I can like myself even when others don't.	3.398	Very High	0.651
8. I can maintain a realistic perspective on my strengths.	3.308	Very High	0.580
9. I am aware of the areas that I need improvement on.	3.376	Very High	0.598
10. I recognize that I am just as valuable as those around me.	3.165	High	0.720
Grand Mean	3.220	High	0.093

Legend for verbal interpretation of mean: 1.00-1.75 = very low, 1.76-2.51 = low, 2.52-3.27 = high, 3.28-4.00 = very high

It was notable that the statement “*I am proud of my accomplishments*” and “*I can like myself even when others do not*” garnered the same mean score of 3.398 (SD = 0.651). This shows that the majority of the respondents recognize their accomplishments and their self-worth. A student recognized that a positive aspect of being far away from their parent is developing a sense of pride in their circumstances.

“Maybe a positive aspect is like... I do not know if this is the right term, but I want to think that I can be proud of my situation even though it is like this. Even if some people are like... They have better circumstances with their parents. However, I do not mind; I should not be ashamed.” [C01, lines 554-558, 562-563]

Moreover, a student also emphasized that they have developed independence due to their situation of having an OFW parent.

“Well, I have lost my laziness and tendency to rely on my parents, so now I can be independent.” [D01, lines 798-800]

The following findings display the levels of self-concept in high school students with OFW parents, which are found to be high. Hence, the students have a generally positive and realistic view of themselves. This is in contrast to the study of Wang et al. (2014) which indicated lower self-concept scores among left-behind children or those with migrant parents. Consequently, Unay and Villosino (2023) have recognized in their study that students with OFW parents have developed resilience and courage in facing their situation, thus fostering a positive self-image of being capable of handling their circumstances. The students also made this evident as they stated they had developed self-reliance due to their parents working overseas.

Acknowledging the high level of self-concept in students with OFW parents, there were still statements that notably scored lower than the others, such as openly expressing their values and perspectives with confidence and believing that they have valuable qualities to offer others. Hence, although the current findings indicate their positive self-assessment of reliability, they may lack confidence in areas beyond self-reliance, suggesting that while these students recognize their capabilities and strengths, struggles with self-advocacy and assertiveness may persist.

3.5 Relationship between Grit and Loneliness

Table 5 exhibits the result of the regression analysis conducted to assess the relationship between grit and loneliness. It indicates that there is a significantly weak, negative correlation between grit and loneliness ($r(131) = -.314, p < .001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This finding indicates that as the level of grit increases, the level of loneliness may decrease. Conversely, a decrease in grit is associated with an increase in loneliness.

Table 5. Relationship between Grit and Loneliness

Variable	n	r	df	p
Grit	133	-.31	131	<.001
Loneliness				

p<0.05 – significant

This finding can be related to the study of Blalock et al. (2015), indicating that grit can reduce adverse environmental effects and loneliness. Moreover, as shown in previous studies, grit acted as a resilience factor to lessen the effects of loneliness in students, assisting them in facing their current challenges (Isenberg et al., 2020; Mosanya, 2020). These insights suggest that helping students foster their grit can effectively reduce feelings of loneliness and improve their emotional and psychological well-being, especially for high school students with OFW parents.

3.6 Relationship between Grit and Academic Performance

Table 6 displays the relationship between grit and academic performance. It has been found that the variables have a significantly moderate, positive correlation ($r(131) = .457, p < .001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that an increase in grit levels may also increase academic performance. Consequently, a decrease in grit may also lead to a decline in academic performance.

Table 6. Relationship between Grit and Academic Performance

Variable	n	r	df	p
Grit	133	.45	131	<.001
Academic Performance				

p<0.05 – significant

The study of Lam and Zhou (2019) supports the finding that greater levels of grit, characterized by ongoing interest and consistent effort, are linked to improved academic performance. In addition, some other studies also emphasize that high school students who possess higher levels of grit are more likely to attain greater success in their academic pursuits, along with other factors such as their overall number of absences (Cosgrove et al., 2018; Richardson et al., 2020). In essence, the findings acquired in this study highlight the importance of grit as a key contributor to academic success among high school students with OFW parents.

3.7 Relationship between Loneliness and Self-concept

Table 7 presents the relationship of loneliness and self-concept, showing that the variables have a significantly weak, negative correlation ($r(131) = -.232, p = .007$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that a decrease in loneliness may increase the levels of self-concept. Conversely, an increase in loneliness may decrease one's self-concept.

Table 7. Relationship between Grit and Self-concept

Variable	n	r	df	p
Loneliness	133	-.23	131	.007
Self-concept				

p<0.05 – significant

This finding aligns with existing literature highlighting how loneliness can adversely affect an individual's perception of themselves. As stated by Richman et al. (2016), the primary reason behind most cases of loneliness among students and community populations is an unclear understanding of their identity. Moreover, Szczesniak et al. (2020) further support these findings with their research, which reveals a negative correlation between loneliness and self-esteem. This suggests that individuals who frequently experience loneliness may find it challenging to maintain a positive self-concept. In the context of migrant parents, Liu et al. (2020) found that their children tend to have a lower self-concept and higher levels of loneliness, demonstrating a negative relationship between the two factors. Hence, although this study's findings demonstrated that the high school students with OFW parents had low levels of loneliness and high levels of self-concept, the significant relationship between the variables indicates the underlying dynamics of loneliness and its potential impact on their self-concept.

3.8 Recommended Intervention Program

Considering all of the acquired findings from this study, developing an intervention program for high school students with OFW parents is discussed. The researchers decided to develop a psychosocial intervention program, given that it can effectively address the interconnected issues of grit, loneliness, academic performance, and self-concept identified in the study. The goal of this program is to maintain, enhance, and cultivate the students with the necessary skills they need to thrive in their future pursuits as students and eventually as functioning citizens of society. Out of all the data gathered, four salient findings were identified as roots for programs that can maintain the very high levels of grit, high levels of academic performance and self-concept, and further lessen the low levels of loneliness that the students currently possess. As Unay and Villosino (2023) stated in their research, for students with OFW parents, creating programs that target their emotional and psychosocial needs while fostering resilience and well-being can significantly enhance their understanding of their experiences. With that in mind, this study aims to develop an intervention program to implement psychosocial activities based on the salient findings.

The intervention program comprises four (4) activities that can provide the students with OFW parents with the resources to navigate their unique challenges. These activities are designed to foster their grit and resilience, strengthen their social connections to alleviate existing feelings of loneliness, enhance their academic motivation, and improve their self-esteem to acquire higher self-concepts. As aforementioned, four (4) salient findings from the study were used as the basis for the intervention program. The first salient finding indicates that despite the very high levels of grit among the high school students with OFW parents, actions must be done to maintain it, especially since the study also indicated a significantly weak, negative correlation between grit and loneliness, and a significantly moderate, positive correlation between grit and academic performance. This is supported by Liang et al. (2018), stating the importance of intervention programs to students with experiences of parental migration, such as having OFW parents, and emphasizing the need to foster self-efficacy and resiliency. Thus, to address this, a resilience and goal-setting workshop is recommended to empower them through related activities in facing challenges, managing stress, and setting realistic goals for their growth as they continue to navigate life as students with OFW parents.

The second salient finding presented that although low levels of loneliness were observed from the results, it is still notable that high school students with OFW parents feel isolated due to being misunderstood by other people. Although they recognize their existing connections and relationships, they may still struggle to acquire understanding from the people around them, as well as express themselves fully to be understood. As Tarroja and Fernando (2013) also stated, having extra-curricular activities intended to act as healthy diversions from loneliness and strengthening social support are effective ways of supporting students with OFW parents. Moreover, the results have shown that loneliness has a significantly weak, negative correlation with self-concept. Thus, the researchers promote utilizing peer support groups for high school students with OFW parents to provide them a safe space to share similar experiences, reducing the possibility of misunderstanding the complexities of having a parent working overseas, and encouraging self-expression to acknowledge a higher self-concept. Trained counselors and professionals will facilitate related activities of open dialogue and self-reflection among the participants.

The third salient finding discusses that high academic performance among high school students with OFW parents signifies their commitment to their current academic pursuits, driven by their desire to be consistently present in class and continuous academic improvement. Due to this, the researchers aimed to promote the importance of maintaining their academic performance while also addressing the areas they find challenging, such as presenting in front of the class. As stated by Liu and Hannum (2023), children who experienced parental migration can benefit from developed mentorship programs or after-school activities that cater to their academic and emotional needs. Thus, the researchers applied this to include academic enrichment activities for the intervention program and encourage students' improvement while collaborating with fellow students.

Lastly, the fourth salient finding focuses on the high levels of self-concept acquired by the high school students with OFW parents and their significant negative relationship with their levels of loneliness. Despite obtaining a high level of self-concept, it was revealed that there are existing struggles among the students in confidently opening up about their values and believing that they have valuable qualities to offer to others. Hence, the researchers advocate for interactive self-concept enhancement activities to bolster self-esteem and promote a positive self-image among children of OFWs. These activities are recognized as effective interventions that engage children in experiential learning, allowing them to explore and express their identities in a supportive environment (Dominguez & Hall, 2022). Therefore, incorporating these interactive activities is essential for enhancing their self-worth and equipping them with valuable skills to navigate challenges related to loneliness and emotional well-being.

4.0 Conclusion

The findings of this study produced several implications that are advantageous for the high school students with OFW parents, their OFW parents, caregivers, the educational sector, the local government officials, and mental health professionals. Moreover, some results contrasted with the existing literature and studies about high school students with OFW parents and their experiences.

Firstly, the students exhibited high grit, academic performance, self-concept, and low levels of loneliness. This addressed key gaps in existing literature and challenged previous studies that highlighted the difficulties faced by children of OFW parents, revealing that these students have developed qualities that promote academic success and self-worth, helping them cope with loneliness. Unlike earlier research indicating high loneliness among this group, this study found low loneliness levels, suggesting they maintain social connections despite parental absence. Additionally, the students demonstrated a strong self-concept, contradicting findings that link parental absence to lower self-esteem. These results call for reassessing the narrative surrounding OFW students, highlighting their potential for success and well-being.

Moreover, the findings indicate a significant positive correlation between grit and academic performance, emphasizing grit as a key contributor to academic success. This contributes to the existing literature regarding the matter, thus highlighting the necessary areas of improvement to aid this specific demographic. Moreover, by implementing psychosocial activities designed to strengthen their skills and alleviate feelings of loneliness, the proposed intervention program seeks to empower and enhance the students' skills to navigate their unique challenges effectively. This contributes valuable insights into the psychosocial dynamics of students with OFW parents, offering practical strategies for supporting their development and well-being.

Furthermore, despite the perceived positive outcomes, more profound exploration of the findings indicates that there are still some notable areas of improvement for the high school students with OFW parents, such as addressing their willingness to step outside of their comfort zone, feeling misunderstood by others, struggling to present their work in class, openly expressing their ideas with confidence, and troubles in believing that they have significant qualities to offer others. These statements, in particular, received less agreement from the students, thus indicating the underlying challenges they experience amidst their capabilities of handling their circumstances. This suggests that support systems should focus on enhancing their strengths and target these specific areas for growth.

The findings of this study also provide an opportunity to explore further the negative relationship between grit and loneliness, the positive relationship between grit and academic performance, and the negative relationship between loneliness and self-concept. It is beneficial for the educational sector, the local government officials,

guidance counselors, and mental health professionals to understand these existing correlations as they can utilize this to develop targeted interventions and support programs that address the specific needs of high school students with OFW parents. By understanding the interplay of these variables, stakeholders can create strategies to enhance resilience and foster a positive school environment for the students.

Overall, these findings highlight the varied experiences of high school students with OFW parents, showing their strengths and areas where they need support. They point to the importance of a well-rounded approach that recognizes their successes and addresses the challenges they face. By fostering an environment that encourages open communication, risk-taking, and self-expression, educators and caregivers can help boost these students' confidence and resilience. Additionally, stakeholders must work together to develop programs supporting emotional well-being and academic achievement. Ultimately, these findings suggest a need to change how we view these students, acknowledging their potential while ensuring they have the resources they need for their overall growth and development.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

The authors shared the workload evenly throughout the research process, collaborating closely to define the research objectives, draft the manuscript, and refine the final paper. Marriane led the overall conduct of the study, edited the entire document, and oversaw the analysis of the results. Darelle ensured the paper's formatting was accurate and actively conducted the necessary surveys and interviews. Similarly, Anjelene assisted in efficiently recording the results and analyzing the responses to ensure they aligned with the research objectives. Maepril thoroughly reviewed and collected relevant literature, participated in the surveys and interviews, and analyzed the gathered data. Lastly, as the research adviser, Darwin supervised the entire study, providing guidance on methodologies and ensuring accurate data analysis.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

There is no conflict of interest in the study's conduct.

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