UNLOCKING ACADEMIC SUCCESS: THE IMPACT OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT, PARENTAL GUIDANCE, AND ASPIRATIONS AMONG SHS STEM STUDENTS

Lester Jhon A. Castil[1], Ralph Rohann M. Dacer[2], Abdias Angelo M. Go[3], Matt Ivan D. Oceña[4], Sarah O. Namoco[5]
University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines Cagayan de Oro City1 [1-5]
Volume 10, Issue No.1

Abstract

Multiple factors beyond classroom learning influence academic excellence. This study examines the combined effects of financial support, parental guidance, and personal aspirations on the academic performance of Senior High School (SHS) STEM students at the Science and Technology University in Northern Mindanao. A descriptive-predictive survey design was employed, involving 60 Grade 11 and Grade 12 STEM students. Data were collected using a validated, researcher-developed questionnaire that measured financial support, parental guidance (moral, emotional, and spiritual), personal aspirations, and academic excellence. Descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression were used for data analysis. Findings showed that students had neutral perceptions of their financial support, strong agreement regarding parental guidance and personal aspirations, and a positive view of their academic excellence. Regression analysis revealed that personal aspiration was the strongest predictor of academic performance ($\beta = 0.748$, $p < .001$), while financial support and parental guidance did not show significant direct influence. The study highlights the importance of cultivating personal aspirations to promote academic excellence. While parental and financial support remains essential, their primary influence may be indirect, reinforcing students' motivation and goal-setting behaviors.

Keywords: *Academic excellence, Financial support, Parental guidance, Personal aspiration, STEM students*

INTRODUCTION

Academic success is widely acknowledged as a vital indicator of future success (Fabillar, Once, & Gabon, 2025), particularly for Senior High School (SHS) students in the STEM strand preparing for higher education and increasingly competitive professional fields. However, achieving academic excellence is not solely the result of intellectual capability or

classroom instruction. A variety of internal and external factors significantly influence student outcomes. Among students in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) strand at the Science and Technology University in Nothern Mindanao, three critical factors emerge as particularly impactful: financial support, parental guidance, and personal aspirations.

Financial support plays a foundational role by providing students with essential resources such as tuition, school supplies, transportation, and access to learning materials. Moneva and Jumag (2020) found that financial limitations can severely hinder students' academic participation and success. Similarly, Norazlan, Yusuf, and Al-Majdhoub (2020) observed that students from financially strained households often experience heightened stress and may be compelled to seek part-time work, which in turn reduces their focus on academics. These studies emphasize financial stability as a crucial factor in promoting consistent academic engagement.

Parental guidance is another important determinant, offering emotional, moral, and spiritual support that fosters resilience and perseverance. Wilder (2014), Mustacisa (2016), and Roy and Giraldo-Garcia (2018) reported that students with strong parental involvement perform better academically and demonstrate greater emotional well-being. More recently, Granziera, et al. (2022) and Wilder (2023) confirmed that parental support—especially in moral and emotional dimensions—helps students navigate academic pressures with confidence. Parental involvement not only provides practical assistance but also reinforces students' motivation to succeed.

Personal aspirations, the intrinsic goals that drive academic behavior, form the third essential factor. Bozzato (2020) and Degebas (2022) showed that students with well-defined aspirations are more committed and persistent, leading to better academic outcomes. Homel and Ryan (2014) added that vague or unrealistic aspirations can undermine motivation and performance, while Arhin (2018) highlighted that career-oriented goals shape study habits and academic persistence.

Although much research

has explored financial support, parental guidance, and personal aspirations individually, few studies have examined their combined influence. Norazlan et al. (2020) and Moneva et al. (2020) studied these factors separately, leaving a gap in understanding their interplay, especially within the Filipino context where family ties and socio-economic factors are deeply intertwined (Laurell, Gholami, Tirri, & Hakkarainen, 2022). Addressing this gap is crucial to fully understanding and supporting STEM students' academic success. This study investigates how these three factors collectively influence academic excellence among SHS STEM students at Science and Technology university.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of perception of SHS STEM students regarding parental support toward their studies in terms of financial stability, and Spiritual, moral, and emotional support?

2. What is the extent of perception of SHS STEM students regarding their Personal aspirations, and Academic excellence?

3. What is the extent of influence of financial support, parental guidance, and personal aspirations on academic excellence as perceived by SHS STEM students?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Understanding the determinants of academic excellence has long been a focus of educational research. This study investigates how three key variables—financial support, parental guidance (moral, emotional, and spiritual), and personal aspirations—shape the academic performance of Senior High School (SHS) STEM students. The literature reviewed provides a theoretical and empirical basis for exploring these variables and supports the development of hypotheses.

Financial Support

Financial support is a critical factor in students' academic engagement and success. Moneva et al. (2020) defined it as the extent to which parents meet their children's educational needs, including tuition, materials, and transportation. Adequate financial backing enables students to focus on their studies without the burden of financial stress. Norazlan et

al. (2020) noted that financial hardship often harms students' health, motivation, and academic performance, with some needing to work part-time, reducing their study time.

Moneva and Jumag (2020) emphasized that financial satisfaction fosters a stable learning environment and strengthens motivation. Similarly, Alika and Edosa (2012) found that meeting students' financial needs improves engagement and academic achievement. Conversely, financial challenges can cause emotional distress, undermining academic success. Collectively, these studies highlight the important role of financial security in supporting students' academic persistence and overall performance.

Parental Guidance (Moral, Emotional, and Spiritual)

Parental guidance—including moral, emotional, and spiritual support—is a key contributor to student success. Wilder (2023) described parental involvement as active engagement in schoolwork and academic progress, including monitoring assignments, setting clear expectations, and offering encouragement. Granziera et al. (2022) found that emotional support from parents significantly boosts students' motivation and well-being, improving academic outcomes. Similarly, Wilder (2014) emphasized that parental involvement consistently predicts academic success across all grade levels.

Roy and Giraldo-García (2018) noted that parental support not only enhances academic performance but also strengthens students' emotional resilience and social adaptability. Branzuela, Namoco, and San Diego (2022) highlighted that parental guidance—including emotional encouragement and spiritual support—remains vital even in flexible, digital learning environments. These findings reinforce the importance of strong parental engagement in supporting students' academic growth and personal development.

Personal Aspirations

Personal aspirations are internal goals that drive students toward academic success. Laurell et al. (2022) described educational aspirations as ambitions that reflect students' belief in their abilities and motivate them to achieve high standards. Bozzato (2020) distinguished between expectations and aspirations, noting that while expectations are grounded in realistic outcomes, aspirations represent ideal goals that push students to strive for

excellence, even if they seem less immediately achievable. Hodis, Sriramachandramurthy, and Sashittal (2015) emphasized that aspirations guide study habits and engagement, with high aspirations linked to persistence and effective learning. Degebas (2022) showed that clear life goals significantly enhance motivation and commitment, while Homel and Ryan (2014) found that well-defined aspirations improve academic performance. Arhin (2018) further highlighted that strong career aspirations shape study behaviors, underscoring the crucial role of personal ambitions in educational success.

Academic Excellence

Academic excellence is typically measured through academic achievements such as high grades, course completion rates, and overall student morale. Sembiring (2017) described it as the consistent demonstration of effort, motivation, and effective learning strategies, emphasizing that success is not solely determined by innate intelligence but by persistence and hard work. This view aligns with the idea that external support systems (financial and parental) and internal drivers (aspirations) are critical in fostering academic excellence.

Hypothesis Development

Based on the literature reviewed, three null hypotheses were developed to guide the empirical phase of this study.

The Influence of Financial Support on Academic Excellence

The literature consistently points to a positive relationship between financial support and academic performance. Norazlan et al. (2020) found that students with insufficient financial support often experience academic setbacks due to financial stress. Moneva et al. (2020) similarly reported a significant correlation between parental financial support and student motivation. Moneva and Jumag (2020) concluded that financial satisfaction enhances determination in academic pursuits. These studies provide a basis for the following hypothesis:

H01: Financial support does not significantly influence students' academic performance when tested at a p-value of less than 0.05.

The Influence of Parental Guidance on Academic Excellence

Parental involvement has been shown to enhance academic success across multiple contexts. Wilder (2014, 2023), (Ranziera et al. (2022), and Roy and Giraldo-García (2018) all found significant positive effects of parental support on academic achievement. Their research highlights that emotional, moral, and spiritual guidance from parents fosters resilience and motivation in students. Thus, the second hypothesis is:

H02: Parental guidance (moral, emotional, spiritual) does not significantly influence students' academic performance when tested at a p-value of less than 0.05.

The Influence of Personal Aspirations on Academic Excellence

Research by Degebas (2022), Homel and Ryan (2014), and Arhin (2018) highlights the significant role of personal aspirations in influencing academic performance. These studies demonstrate that students with clear goals are more motivated and committed to academic success. Consequently, the third hypothesis is:

H03: Personal aspiration does not significantly influence students' academic performance when tested at a p-value of less than 0.05.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used a descriptive-predictive survey design to examine relationships among variables without manipulation. This design captured STEM students' perceptions of financial support, parental guidance, and personal aspirations and how this influence academic success. As noted by Omair (2015), predictive designs are effective for identifying patterns and associations among factors, making this approach suitable for understanding how external and internal motivators jointly impact academic excellence.

Research Setting

The study was conducted

at Science and Technology University's Senior High School Department, chosen for its accessibility and relevant STEM student population. Coordination with administrators enabled smooth data collection during class hours. While institutional familiarity aided logistics, structured procedures ensured impartial data gathering and minimized potential biases throughout the research process.

Respondents of the Study

The study surveyed 60 STEM students, who were conveniently sampled from Science and Technology University, with 30 students from each of the Grade 11 and Grade 12 cohorts. These respondents were chosen because their academic demands align with the study's focus on financial support, parental guidance, and personal aspirations. The sample size followed the guidelines of Cooper and Schindler (2014) and Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), which recommend at least 30 participants for predictive studies. Although the original target was 130, 60 respondents were deemed sufficient, given time constraints. Convenience sampling was employed in this study due to its practicality and ease of access to respondents, which facilitated efficient data collection (Golzar, Noor, & Tajik, 2022). However, it is the researcher who acknowledges that this sampling method inherently limits the generalizability of the findings, as it may not adequately represent the broader population (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

Table 1 The Demographic Profile of the Respondents (n=60)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Female	41	32
Male	19	68
Age		
16 years old	27	45
17 years old	22	37
18 years old	8	13
19 years old	1	2
Preferred not to say	2	3
Grade Level		
Grade 11	30	50
Grade 12	30	50

Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-developed survey divided into five sections. Section 1 collected demographic information, while Sections 2 to 5 assessed Financial Support (8 items), Parental Guidance (8 items), Personal Aspiration (7 items), and Academic Excellence (7 items), all measured on a 5-point Likert scale. To establish content validity, the instrument was reviewed by three experts in research methodology, content, and language, following Lynn's (1986) validation process. Based on expert recommendations, 30 well-aligned items were retained.

To ensure the reliability of the researcher-constructed instrument, a pilot test was conducted with 30 Senior High School respondents. The instrument's internal consistency was evaluated using Jamovi software, and the reliability analysis produced a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.924 (see Table 2), indicating excellent internal consistency across the items (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011; Taber, 2018). The scale yielded a mean score of 3.99 with a standard deviation of 0.794. These results demonstrate that the instrument reliably captures the core constructs of the study, supporting the credibility and consistency of the data collected. It is important to note that the respondents involved in the pilot testing were not included in the actual data collection phase of the study to avoid potential bias.

Table 2. *Cronbach Alpha Results for the Reliability Test*

	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Scale	3.99	0.794	0.924

Data collection was carried out by distributing printed questionnaires to the selected STEM students during scheduled school hours. Equal numbers of surveys were provided to both Grade 11 and 12 classes, with 30 questionnaires allocated to each group. The researchers coordinated closely with class advisers and school administrators to minimize disruptions and ensure that students completed the survey in a focused environment. Respondents were briefed about the study's purpose and procedures before participation. The data collection process was completed over a two-

week period to accommodate classroom schedules and maximize response rates.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to summarize respondents' demographic profiles and perceptions related to each variable. For hypothesis testing, multiple linear regression was employed to determine the predictive relationship between Financial Support, Parental Guidance, Personal Aspiration, and Academic Excellence. According to Field (2018), this analytical approach is suitable for identifying the strength and direction of influence among independent and dependent variables. The data analysis was performed using SPSS, ensuring that findings were presented accurately and objectively.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered strictly to ethical standards in line with institutional, national, and international research guidelines. Prior to data collection, the researchers sought approval from the High School Principal. Participants were fully informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and confidentiality measures. Written consent was obtained, and participants were assured of their right to withdraw at any point without penalty. To ensure privacy, all data were anonymized and securely stored. Transparency and integrity were maintained throughout the research process, ensuring that no fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism occurred. (Kakar, Rasheed, Rashid, & Akhter, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and interprets the study's findings, highlighting the relationships between financial support, parental guidance, personal aspirations, and the academic excellence of SHS STEM students.

Level of Perception About Financial Support

This research question explores students' perceptions of the financial support they receive from their parents and its impact on their academic pursuits. Table 3 shows an overall neutral perception (M = 3.12, SD = 1.00). While students generally feel moderately supported,

concerns remain regarding costly academic plans (M = 2.40, SD = 0.98) and access to study materials (M = 2.88, SD = 0.92), suggesting uneven financial support across different needs.

The findings indicate that despite moderate financial security, specific financial barriers persist, especially concerning future academic investments. This aligns with Norazlan et al. (2020) and Moneva et al. (2020), who noted that financial challenges can hinder academic focus. The agreement on motivational support (M = 3.64) supports Moneva and Jumag (2020), emphasizing that financial satisfaction enhances determination. Strengthening scholarships and resource subsidies may help STEM students overcome these barriers.

Table 3. *Perceived Level of Perception about Financial Support of the Respondents*

Question Items	Mean	SD	Description
1. I am confident that my family can pay my school fees on time.	3.20	0.99	Neutral
2. I have no worries in pursuing expensive/costly academic plans in the future.	2.40	0.98	Disagree
3. I have access to the necessary materials and resources for my studies without financial difficulties.	2.88	0.92	Neutral
4. I can participate in school-related extracurricular activities without worrying about the cost.	2.82	0.91	Neutral
5. My family's financial support helps alleviate the stress associated with academic performance.	3.15	1.01	Neutral
6. I feel that the level of financial support from my family influences my motivation to succeed academically.	3.64	1.00	Agree
7. I believe my family's financial situation will not hinder my academic performance.	3.33	1.04	Neutral
8. I am confident that financial issues will not prevent me from continuing or delaying my studies.	3.57	1.13	Agree
Overall	3.12	1.00	Neutral

Level of Perception About Parental Guidance

This research question aimed to assess respondents' perceptions of the moral, spiritual, and emotional guidance they receive from their parents to support academic success. As shown in Table 4, the overall mean score was 3.82 (SD = 0.94), indicating that students generally agreed they receive strong support. The highest-rated item was "My parents taught me to work harder on my tests because it is the right thing to do" (M = 4.12, SD = 0.88), while the lowest was "My parents try to lift me up emotionally when they see me failing my tests" (M = 3.58, SD = 1.08).

The findings show that students perceive consistent parental guidance, particularly in promoting hard work and spiritual encouragement.

This supports Wilder (2014, 2023) and Roy and Giraldo-García (2018), who emphasized the impact of parental support on resilience and academic performance. Granziera, et al., (2022) also highlighted the role of spiritual encouragement in sustaining motivation.

Table 4. *Perceived Level of Perception about Parental Guidance of the Respondents*

Question Items	Mean	SD	Description
1. My parents try to lift me up emotionally when they see me failing my tests.	3.58	1.08	Agree
2. I believe that being accompanied by my parents to a place of worship contributes to better test scores.	3.57	0.91	Agree
3. My parents praise me and give me joy when I achieve better test scores.	3.85	0.86	Agree
4. My parents encouraged me to answer quizzes more responsibly and to never resort to cheating.	4.07	0.88	Agree
5. I believe that my parents' spiritual beliefs motivated me to work harder in class.	3.55	0.96	Agree
6. My parents taught me to work harder on my tests because it is the right thing to do.	4.12	0.88	Agree
7. My parents pray for me to achieve higher test scores before exams.	3.92	0.87	Agree
8. My parents encourage me to pray whenever I struggle to face my tests.	3.90	1.04	Agree
Overall	3.82	0.94	Agree

Extent Level of Perception About Personal Aspiration

This research question examined the extent of students' personal aspirations related to their academic performance in STEM. As shown in Table 5, the overall mean was 3.88 (SD = 0.98), indicating that respondents generally agreed they have strong academic ambitions. The highest-rated item, "I believe that excelling in my STEM studies will open doors to better career opportunities" (M = 4.23, SD = 0.83), reflects a clear focus on future success, while the lowest-rated item, "I aim to be among the top-performing students in my class" (M = 3.50, SD = 1.05), still showed positive aspirations.

The findings confirm that students hold high aspirations, especially linking academic excellence to future career benefits. This aligns with Bozzato (2020) and Degebas (2022), who emphasized that clear goals drive motivation. Homel and Ryan (2014) also noted that strong aspirations promote persistence, suggesting the value of mentorship and career programs in supporting STEM success.

Table 5. *Extent Level of Perception about Personal Aspiration of the Respondents*

Question Items	Mean	SD	Description
1. I aspire to achieve high grades in all of my STEM subjects.	3.95	1.06	Agree
2. I aim to be among the top-performing students in my class.	3.5	1.05	Agree
3. I work very hard to accomplish the difficult academic goals I set for myself.	3.85	0.95	Agree
4. I believe that excelling in my STEM studies will open doors to better career opportunities	4.23	0.83	Strongly Agree

5. I feel driven to continuously improve my academic performance in STEM subjects.	3.95	0.94	Agree
6. I aspire to participate in academic competitions, research projects, or internships related to my STEM studies.	3.56	0.99	Agree
7. I am determined to complete my STEM education with honors or distinctions.	4.10	1.01	Agree
Overall	3.88	0.98	Agree

Extent Level of Perception About Academic Excellence

This research question assessed students' perceptions of their own academic excellence and commitment to high standards. The overall mean was 3.68 (SD = 0.87), indicating that respondents generally agreed they demonstrate academic excellence. The highest-rated item, "I am willing to put in extra work to improve my understanding of difficult topics" (M = 4.00, SD = 0.83), reflects strong motivation, while the lowest, "I consistently dedicate time and effort to study outside of class hours" (M = 3.27, SD = 0.93), suggests that regular extra study may be challenging.

These findings support Sembiring (2017), who stressed that academic excellence requires both achievement and sustained effort. Similarly, Wilder (2014) emphasized that consistent motivation is vital for long-term success. Schools may consider encouraging structured self-study routines and offering additional academic resources to further strengthen students' commitment to excellence.

Table 6. *Extent Level of Perception about Academic Excellence of the Respondents*

Question Items	Mean	SD	Description
1. I consistently put my best effort into all my academic tasks and assignments	3.78	0.85	Agree
2. I consistently dedicate time and effort to study outside of class hours.	3.27	0.93	Neutral
3. I aim to achieve the highest possible standard in every subject I take.	3.56	0.82	Agree
4. I dedicate the necessary time and effort to ensure I perform excellently in all my studies.	3.69	0.86	Agree
5. I always seek to improve my performance, even after achieving good results.	3.83	0.95	Agree
6. I am willing to put in extra work to improve my understanding of difficult topics.	4.00	0.83	Agree
7. I take initiative in learning beyond what is taught in the classroom to excel academically.	3.59	0.83	Agree
Overall	3.68	0.87	Agree

Extent Level of Influence About Financial Support, Parental Guidance, Personal Aspiration

This research question aimed to examine how financial support, parental guidance, and personal aspirations influence the respondents' academic excellence. As shown in Table 7, the regression model was significant, $F(3, 56) = 18.20$, $p < .001$, with an R^2 of 0.493, indicating that 49.3% of the variance in academic excellence is explained by the three predictors. Among them, personal aspiration emerged as a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.748$, $p < .001$), while financial support ($\beta = 0.116$, $p = 0.373$) and parental guidance ($\beta = -0.047$, $p = 0.709$) were not significant predictors of academic excellence.

The findings show that personal aspiration is the strongest predictor of academic excellence, supporting Bozzato (2020) and Degebas (2022), who noted that clear academic goals enhance motivation and effort. Financial support and parental guidance were not significant direct predictors, differing from Wilder (2014), Moneva and Jumag (2020), and Branzuela, Namoco, and San Diego (2022), who highlighted parental guidance's strong impact. This suggests that while parental and financial support may not directly predict academic excellence here, they likely play an indirect role by shaping aspirations. Programs that foster goal-setting and sustained parental involvement remain essential for student success.

Table 7. *Level of Influence on Financial Support, Parental Guidance, and Personal Aspiration of the Respondents towards their Academic Excellence*

Model Fit Measures

				Overall Model Test			
Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	df1	df2	p
1	0.702	0.493	0.466	18.2	3	56	< .001

Model Coefficients – Academic Excellence

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p	Hypothesis >
Financial Support	0.116	0.129	0.898	0.373	Accept
Parental Guidance	-0.047	0.125	-0.376	0.709	Accept
Personal Aspiration	0.748	0.107	6.987	< .001	Reject

CONCLUSION

This study examined the extent to which financial support, parental guidance, and personal aspirations influence academic excellence among SHS STEM students. Findings

revealed that respondents had a neutral perception of their financial support, agreed that they receive strong moral, spiritual, and emotional guidance from their parents, and expressed high personal aspirations. Although students generally perceived themselves as academically excellent, the strongest driver of their academic performance was personal aspiration. Financial support and parental guidance did not show significant direct influence, despite being foundational factors. These results suggest that while financial and parental support provide essential groundwork, it is students' internal drive that most powerfully predicts academic success. The ultimate implication is that educational institutions should focus not only on external supports but also on programs that cultivate students' intrinsic motivation and personal goals. Strengthening students' aspirations through mentorship, career guidance, and personal development workshops is essential for sustaining long-term academic achievement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, schools may consider implementing academic goal-setting workshops and personalized mentoring to help STEM students strengthen their personal aspirations, identified in this study as a key factor in academic excellence. Additionally, educational institutions might explore enhancing parental involvement through regular communication and family-focused seminars, as financial and parental support, while not directly predictive here, may still indirectly influence student motivation. Finally, based on the limitations of this study, future research may consider an in-depth qualitative study across various schools and regions could provide deeper insights into why financial and parental support showed no significant direct influence. Expanding the sample and context may clarify these relationships and inform future interventions.

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