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# Parental Occupation, Social Class, and School Choice in Southern Philippines: Their Implications to Educational Public-Private Partnership vis-à-vis the K-12 SHS Voucher Program

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**Abstract.** This study explores the education inequality brought about by senior high school (SHS) choice of families in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, Philippines, considering a nonmonetary approach to social class based on parental occupation. Furthermore, it underscores implications for educational public-private partnership (EPPP) regarding the K-12 SHS Voucher Program in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). We used the explanatory sequential mixed methods research design, wherein quantitative research is complemented by qualitative research. A survey of family education, parental (breadwinner) occupation, and SHS school choice was conducted among Grade 12 public, private, and charter schools students. Data analysis considered social status, power of school choice, and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) government. Results showed more SHS participation from the middle class. Although the charter SHS entails social cohesion, overall findings suggest student segregation in the municipality, considering the public and private SHSs student compositions. As such, there is education inefficiency and inequity, revealing EPPP inefficiency. Based on document analysis, a complementary method, these education inequality issues are attributed to the partial implementation of ARMM regional autonomy posing constraints to government service delivery and compounding poverty. Therefore, government support and regional mechanisms to strengthen capability and accountability are recommended to enhance the state capacity and service delivery in BARMM, Philippines.

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## 1. Introduction

Beginning in the 1970s, education sociologists worldwide have been thoroughly investigating and addressing the deepening social inequalities in society (Hoadley & Muller, 2010; Tsiplakides, 2018). Social class, a division in society regarding social and economic status, is central to social inequality discourse (Vilardo & Wepprecht, 2016). It is affected by factors such as education, occupation, income, wealth, and family background. This study uses a nonmonetary approach based on parental occupation to study social class and social inequality in Philippine society (Albert et al., 2018; Chen, 2022).

Sociologists generally use three social categories, lower/working class, middle class, and upper class, in studying social class; however, there has yet to be an internationally accepted agreement regarding their definitions and boundaries (Albert et al., 2018; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019). Henceforth, using our study framework, we propose definitions of the three social class classifications (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2022; Termes et al., 2020). Firstly, the working class includes families with unstable and low-income employment. Secondly, the middle class comprises families with more formal and stable employment. Thirdly, the upper class comprises affluent and prominent families occupying top positions (e.g., managers, executives) in government or the private sector, including small business owners. However, debates surrounding education inequality usually point to the stark difference between (at least) the middle class and the lower/working class (Costa et al., 2020; Goudeau et al., 2021; Lareau, 2003; Reay, 2018); this study, therefore, takes these two as the main subjects of interest. As such, the middle and upper classes are often lumped together in this paper.

Philippine society is comprised of 74.3% or 14 million lower-class families, 25.2% or 4.7 million middle-class families, and 0.1% or 21.7 thousand upper-class families (Baldwin, 2015; Termes et al., 2020). Most upper and middle classes live in major cities, while the lower class tends to dwell in rural areas (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020). This setup offers the upper and middle classes an advantage regarding access to quality education, career development, and opportunities over their lower/working class counterparts.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (2022) classifies the occupational groups of the Philippine working population based on two essential criteria, skill level and skill specialization, wherein formal education and field of knowledge are part: (a) managers, (b) professionals, (c) armed forces occupations, (d) skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers, (e) technicians, (f) clerical support workers, (g) service and sales workers, (h) craft and related trades workers, (i) plant and machine operators and assemblers, and (j) elementary occupations. Therefore, considering these classifications, one's occupation is constituted by a certain level of education.

The occupations mentioned above represent social positions whereby highly educated professionals with technical knowledge and expertise occupy top positions in government or the private sector, otherwise called white-collar jobs. Those with lesser education or training occupy lower-level positions, called blue-collar jobs or manual labor. Following Bourdieu's (1977, 1984) notion of capital, the different occupational positions manifest a form of inequality brought about by unequal access or participation in the field of education. In his social and cultural reproduction theory, Bourdieu posited those upper/middle-class families have the advantage in society since they have the capabilities to accumulate more economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital than their lower/working class counterparts (Azubuike et al., 2021; Bourdieu, 1977; Lareau, 2003). Economic capital refers to material resources or wealth, cultural capital as to valued knowledge such as education, social capital to social networks or connections, and symbolic capital as to prestige or social position. To a certain extent, one's occupational status is constituted by these forms of capital.

Bourdieu (1977, 1984) further pointed out that social actors strategize to seize opportunities on a playing field. In her study, Lareau (2003) showed that families employ strategies to preserve capital and maintain social status. Unfortunately, due to capital differentiation, various strategies were observed across social classes, specifically between the middle and lower/working classes. Given their adequate material resource and knowledge of the school system, the middle class could apply effective strategies like concerted cultivation of the children's potential. In comparison, the lower/working class could not apply similar strategies due to capital limitations or inadequate resources and knowledge of the school system.

In the Philippines, Termes et al. (2020) found that families of different class backgrounds apply strategies regarding school choice amid differing views about the different types of schools. For instance, many say private school education is often perceived as better than public school education and contributes to better academic outcomes (Pedró et al., 2015). On the other hand, others argue in favor of the opposite and even criticize private schools for contributing to greater segregation and education inequality. Primarily, school choice is brought about by the educational public-private partnership (EPPP). With EPPP, the state contracts the private sector to involve them in the education service delivery, thereby increasing parents' power of school choice (Termes et al., 2020). In the case of the Philippines, EPPP primarily operates through the Education Service Contracting (ESC) program wherein private schools receive vouchers for the ESC grantees they enroll, supposedly taken in by government public schools (Department of Education, 2021; Termes et al., 2020). The ESC "began [in the 1980s] as a targeted voucher scheme ... intended for students in overcrowded public schools whose families are under the national poverty line, exhibiting a clear focus for equity" (Termes et al., 2020, p. 93).

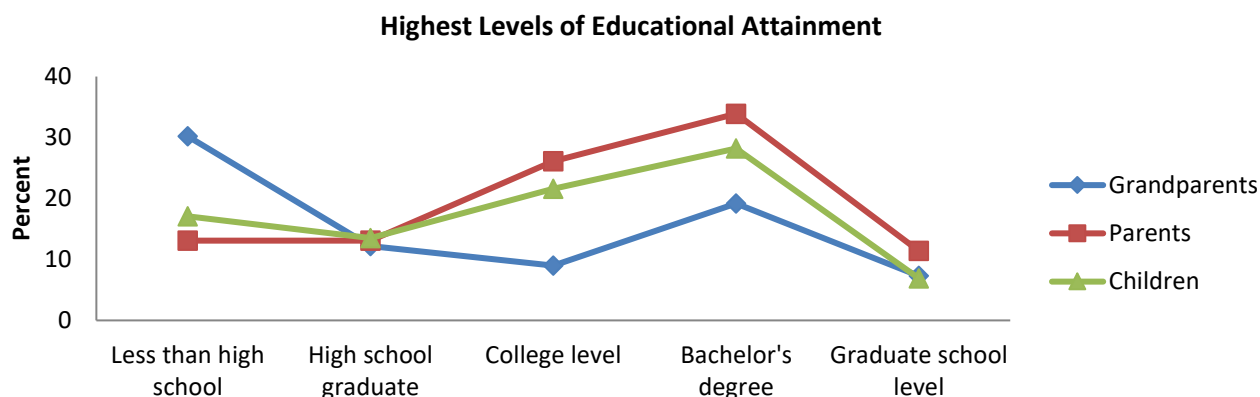
The present Philippine K-12 education system operates on the principle of public-private partnership (PPP) based on the provisions of the 1987 Constitution (Department of Education, 2021). “Article XIV, Section 1, of the constitution guarantees the right of every Filipino to accessible and quality basic education, and Article XIV, Section 2.3 mandates the State to establish a system of, among others, subsidies, and incentives to deserving individuals in both public and private schools” (Department of Education, 2021). In upholding these provisions, the Philippine Republic Act No. 10533 or the K-12 Law expands the programs of assistance under Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE). Thereby, E-GASTPE Law (RA No. 8545) extends E-GASTPE benefits to qualified senior high school (SHS) students.

Extensive studies have been conducted on EPPP or PPP in education as this has been proposed for K-12 education systems adopted by countries worldwide (Ladd, 2002; Ross & Yan, 2015). However, as Humble and Dixon (2017) pointed out, there are scant studies on EPPP in conflict zones; thus, little is known about the consequences of EPPP in conflict-affected areas. Hence, this study aims to fill this research gap by situating it in a conflict-affected context in the southern Philippines, where poverty is also very high (World Bank, 2011).

We present our research setting and guide questions in the succeeding sections. Then, we discuss our related literature on the interlinks of parental occupation, social class, and school choice; the EPPP; and the K-12 Senior High School Voucher Program (SHS VP). Our research methodology, results, discussion with implications, conclusions, recommendations, and limitations follow.

### **1.1. The Research Setting**

This study was conducted in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, a Muslim-dominated community in the southern Philippines. Our survey of our research respondents from this municipality revealed that their families’ levels of highest educational attainment over a three-generation period (grandparents, parents, children) are increasing. For example, Figure 1 shows that the highest educational attainment of the majority in the grandparents' generation is less than high school and bachelor's degree in the parents and their children's generations, with the children's educational attainment is considered as rising. This trend suggests an improved Philippine education provision in this locality and families taking advantage of the benefits of education for social mobility. Nonetheless, social inequality is rampant in this southernmost island province of the country due to low quality and widespread inequality in the educational provision, consequential effects of conflicts, and high poverty incidence (DFAT Australia & World Bank, 2014; Hailaya, 2014; Malapit et al., 2003; Zamora & Dorado, 2015).



**Figure 1: Highest levels of educational attainment in the families of Grade 12 students in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi**

Public and private schools and state universities and colleges (SUCs) deliver basic education in Tawi-Tawi. Since the enactment of the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 or the K-12 education system, these school institutions have been offering SHSs effective School Year 2016–2017, accommodating Junior High School (JHS) completers. Under this new education reform, families can choose any SHS to enroll their children by the time they complete JHS, depending on the track (e.g., academic, sports, technical-vocational, arts and design) chosen and the kind of support available in the SHS. Accordingly, students intending to pursue Grades 11 and 12 can choose to enroll in a public, private, or charter school as the Philippine government offers vouchers through the K-12 SHS VP to support eligible SHS students (Department of Education, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019).

Taking the case of Bongao, Tawi-Tawi in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), Philippines, this study examines the social composition of the different types of schools present in this municipality, focusing on parental occupations, social class backgrounds, and family-school choice strategies and what these reveal about the EPPP implementation of the Philippines recently undergoing K-12 education reform. The following are the research questions for this study.

1. What are the occupations of the breadwinner (main provider) in the Grade 12 students' families and their corresponding social class classifications?
2. What are the school choices of lower/working class, middle class, and upper-class families for their children, and their corresponding implications to EPPP in K-12 implementation?

## **2. Interlinks of Parental Occupation, Social Class, and School Choice**

Jimenez et al. (1991) compared public and private secondary education performance on standardized math and language tests in the Dominican Republic, Colombia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Tanzania. They found that the performance of the private sector was far better than the public sector. This finding reflects Coulson's (2009) study on school choice in the U.S., which found

“the private sector outperformed the public sector in an overwhelming majority of cases” (p. 32).

More recently, in the Philippines, Termes et al. (2020), in their study, pointed out the advantages of private schools vis-à-vis school choice, such that the competition for high-performing students in the country is more evident among private schools than among public and private schools, quite the contrary of the U.S. experience wherein “public schools do respond constructively to competition, by raising their achievement and productivity” (Hoxby, 2003). Termes et al.’s (2020) finding applies in Tawi-Tawi, the southernmost province of the Philippines. In her study, Ayangco-Derramas (2022) underscored that kindergarten learners’ performance in private schools in Tawi-Tawi reached the “proficient” level. In contrast, public school performance only reached the “approaching proficiency” level, suggesting that the private sector is better than the public sector in education service delivery in the province.

Advocates suggest charter schools, free, publicly-funded, independently-operated schools of choice operating with more autonomy than traditional public schools, deliver higher learning performance at a lower cost (Hoxby, 2003; Klapper, 2023; Reed & Rose, 2015), thus attracting many low-performing students from public schools (Hoxby, 2003). Aside from private schools, charter schools also attract middle-class parents as they are believed to help children develop more of their creative, academic, and athletic talents (Bosetti & Pyryt, 2007). In the southern Philippines, the Mindanao State University, with one of its campuses in Tawi-Tawi, is a chartered university by virtue of Republic Act No. 1387, As Amended by Republic Act No. 1893, Republic Act No. 3791 and Republic Act No. 3868 (Mindanao State University System, 2013), delivering basic and higher education alongside sectarian and non-sectarian private educational institutions, and the Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education (MBHTE) that caters to the basic education and with the broadest coverage among the three major types of educational institutions in the province (Iqbal, 2023).

Taking the choice of different types of schools into account, Ball and Gewirtz (1997), citing at least 13 studies carried out in national and local contexts, established “that there is a strong association between social class and school choice” (p. 575), which echoes Gabay-Egozi’s (2016) position concerning social class and education:

*Within governmental and academic discourses parental school choice is usually construed in terms of privileged middle-class values and norms. Middle class parents are mostly identified as rational careful choice-makers, whereas less-privileged families are thought to be less equipped to undertake the work of choice ... as they lack the resources to ‘devise and execute the complex strategies’ it entails. (p. 3)*

Bosetti and Pyryt (2007) corroborated the preceding point in their investigation on social class differentiation and school choice by stating that, for middle-class parents, choosing a good school for their children is a moral imperative, and not doing so is viewed as their failure as parents. Their study shows that high-

income parents with higher-level of education choose a private school over a public school.

On the other hand, Termes et al.'s (2020) study on Filipino family school choice strategies and the schools' logics of action to attract students in the National Capital Region (NCR) of the Philippines reveals that the most frequent elements of Filipino family school choice are distance, cost, proximity, and social composition. Furthermore, although Bosetti and Pyryt's (2007) results concur that distance or proximity to home is one of the parents' main reasons for school choice, their findings vary according to school type: School distance is the top reason for public school parents, academic reputation for alternative school parents, and shared values and beliefs for religious private school parents.

The link between school distance and school choice also figures in the study of Goldring and Philips (2008) in the United States of America and Burgess et al. (2011) in England. Burgess et al.'s (2011) findings, however, disclose there is inequality in access to (nearer) more advantaged schools between children from high and low socioeconomic status (SES), with the high SES having a greater probability of getting slots than their low SES counterparts. Concerning SES and school choice, Opdenakker and Van Damme (2006) pointed out that "research has established that school choice is rarely exercised independently of socioeconomic background and that minorities more often attend public sector schools and schools in the immediate neighborhood" (p. 111). They further noted that school type (e.g., private school, charter school, public school) seem to impact school effect due to differences in, for example, "group composition," "the social and learning climate," and "the opportunity to learn" (p. 87).

Several authors of various studies tackle parental occupation and its wide-range of implications for human development. According to these authors, parental occupation produces a significant impact on individuals' socioeconomic development (Xing et al., 2021), is associated with education (Friberg et al., 2015), influences offspring's lifestyle behaviors (Vereecken et al., 2004) such as smoking or tobacco use (Fagan et al., 2005) and professional choices and values (Pablo-Lerchundi et al., 2015), matters to children's school outcomes in math (Giannelli & Rapallini, 2019), and predicts parental involvement in education (Nguon, 2012). Furthermore, parents' status and authority play a vital role in children's study field choice (Tao & Cheng, 2022), career choice (Alboliteeh et al., 2022), leadership emergence and transformational behaviors (Duan et al., 2022), and formation of class identity (Macfarlane, 2022). In summary, these studies reveal that high-level occupations with higher education and income effectively produce a stronger impact and influence on children's behavior than low-level occupations, reflecting views about social class, whereby the middle-class parents with greater capital (e.g., high-level occupation, high-level education, high income) better influence and shape children's behavior as compared with their working-class counterparts (Lareau, 2003; Sullivan, 2002).

Therefore, based on the preceding findings, (parental) occupation, as symbolic of Bourdieu's capital, can also illuminate social class. In a sense, by naming one's

occupation, we can distinguish who among individuals or social groups wield a higher or lower (symbolic) capital, thereby enabling us to identify and classify who belongs to the working class, the middle class, or the upper class. The use of the occupation of a household head in research is figured in the study by Vereecken (2004). The present study also uses occupation to investigate social class, but its scope and policy implications will make it distinct and novel.

The educational implications of the convergence of and interlinks among parental occupation, social class, and school choice in the Philippines conflict-affected province are exciting findings based on the preceding premise.

### **3. Educational Public-Private Partnership**

The Educational Public-Private Partnership (EPPP) is a global trend to address education access and equity through increasing school choices among parents and competition among school systems to improve education provision (Termes et al., 2020). Public-Private Partnership (PPP), where the EPPP falls, "refers to an agreement between the public and the private sectors, in which some of the services or tasks that are the responsibility of the public sector are provided by the private sector" (Fleta-Asin et al., 2020, p. 1489).

In many developing countries where the state provision of education is poor, non-state provision is prevalent, ranging from "non-government and other civil society organizations ... private providers with profitmaking motives ... and religious providers" (Rose, 2010, p. 475). Notably, the prominence of the for-profit private sector since the 1990s was mainly brought about by an international neoliberal agenda that advocates for a reduced role of the state through the participation of the private sector in public service delivery (Blasco & Vargas, 2011). Despite recognizing the efficiency of service delivery through PPP (Pedró et al., 2015), Rose (2010) warned about the unregulated proliferation of for-profit and not-for-profit provisions that might result in the fragmentation of service delivery, prompting inequity.

Unlike other sectors, partnerships within an education sector are crucial for the state for several reasons: (a) education plays a significant role in the identity formation of the state and its members (political); (b) education is a lifelong activity involving short-term and long-term planning and execution of educational programs and projects; and (c) education has a potential role in social mobility and instrumental in promoting greater equity (Rose, 2010). To this end, one option for the government to safeguard its interest in its partnerships with the private sector is "to play a role in regulating and monitoring non-state provision to ensure that choice and competition do not undermine equity objectives" (Rose, 2010, p. 475).

School choice as a product of EPPP is sometimes referred to as "school voucher," a mechanism whereby private schools obtain state funding to enroll qualified students from public schools provided they meet set standards and requirements of the state's public school system (Hanushek et al., 2006). Aside from public and private schools, charter schools also benefit from public funding



but exercise a certain level of autonomy in their educational function. Thus, a charter school may be in a continuum between public and private schools.

Most K-12 education systems operate through PPP/EPPP (Ladd, 2002). However, accordingly, this mode of governing public education does not convincingly demonstrate desirable results in improving education quality (Burgess et al., 2011), especially in developing countries (Diaz-Rios et al., 2021). For this reason, its effectiveness is held in question, especially on the aspect of balancing efficiency and equity, which is to be seen as a continuum (Pedró et al., 2015; see also Ball, 1993; Burgess et al., 2011; Diaz-Rios et al., 2021; Ladd, 2002; Rose, 2010; Termes et al., 2020). Supposedly, the education system is efficient when parents are granted more power to choose schools for their children and for schools to compete for the best educational services they can offer to the clientele in the education market. However, on the other hand, inequity is a tendency due to the possible social and cultural segregation of students of different backgrounds in schools. For example, more and more advantaged students flock to private schools while the less-advantaged ones are segregated in public schools, possibly compromising social cohesion (Bosetti & Pyryt, 2007; Calero & Cabrera, 2023; Humble & Dixon, 2017; Termes et al., 2020; World Bank, 2011). This study will, therefore, further investigate education efficiency and equity in an understudied conflict-affected province in the southern Philippines.

#### **4. The Philippine K-12 Senior High School Voucher Program (SHS VP)**

Under Philippine Republic Act No. 10533 (Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013), beginning in June 2016, the Department of Education (2015) mainstreamed the SHS in the Philippines. Said law also expands the coverage of the Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE) by providing funding assistance to Grades 11 and 12 students through the SHS VP. DepEd Order No. 11, s. 2015 explicitly states

*The DepEd would like to use this mechanism to enable 30-40% of its students to enroll in non-DepEd schools which will offer SHS, including private JHSs (junior high schools), private HEIs (higher education institutions), state and local colleges and universities, and technical-vocational institutions (TVIs). This public-private partnership (PPP) would serve to decongest public schools, reduce or delay the need to construct DepEd SHS facilities and hire government teachers, and provide less affluent students more options for SHS education. (DepEd, 2015, p. 1)*

The DepEd grants permit to non-DepEd schools that meet its requirements for participation in the SHS VP. DepEd engaged the Private Education Assistance Committee (2020) to co-implement the GASTPE Program, including the ESC program and the SHS VP. The DepEd eligibility guide applied when this study was conducted in School Year 2019–2020 is shown in Table 1:

**Table 1: DepEd eligibility guide for School Year 2019–2020**

Not eligible	QVRs [Qualified Voucher Recipients] (No need to apply)	VAs [Voucher Applicants] (Need to apply)
Grade10 completers before SY 2018-2019  To clarify: ALS & A&E Test and PEPT passers prior to SY 2018-2019 are also not eligible	Category A: Grade 10 completers in DepEd public schools	Category D: Grade 10 completers in private schools who are not ESC grantees
High School Graduates of March 2015 or earlier	Category B: Grade 10 completers in SUCs and LUCs	Category E: Learners who took/will take the ALS A&E Test in the current school year
Incoming Grade 12 learners who were not part of SHS VP in Grade 11	Category C: Grade 10 completers who are ESC grantees	Category F: Learners who took/will take the PEPT* in the current school year
Non-Filipino learners		

\*For VAs who fall under Categories E and F, they may apply for the voucher while waiting for results of the ALS A&E Test and PEPT, respectively.

*Note.* Adapted from DepEd Order No. 010, s. 2019

On the other hand, Table 2 illustrates the maximum applicable voucher amount (in Philippine peso per student per school year):

**Table 2. The maximum applicable voucher amount**

Location of Non-DepEd SHS	QVR/QVA Category	Voucher Amount	Voucher Amount for SUC/LUC
National Capital Region (NCR)	Categories A, B, E, F	22,500	11,250
	Categories C, D	18,000	
Highly urbanized cities (HUCs) outside of NCR	Categories A, B, E, F	20,000	10,000
	Categories C, D	16,000	
All other locations	Categories A, B, E, F	17,500	8,750
	Categories C, D	14,000	

*Note.* Adapted from DepEd Order No. 010, s. 2019

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1. The Research Design

This study used an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, complementing quantitative research with qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). Document analysis is used to make sense of the survey findings (Bowen, 2009; Fetterman, 2010).

### 5.2. The Research Locale

This study was conducted in the three types and biggest public, private, and charter (state university) SHSs in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, BARMM, Philippines. These schools are not explicitly named for anonymity purposes. The public and

private SHSs are SHS VP participating schools. Although the charter SHS is not included in the list of the SHS VP participating schools, it is included in this study since it received public funding, making its tuition fees far cheaper than those of the private SHS.

### **5.3. The Research Respondents**

The research respondents are 245 Grade 12 SHS students enrolled during School Year 2019–2020. Of the 245 student respondents, 66 enrolled in the public SHS, 77 in the state university SHS, and 102 in the private SHS.

### **5.4. The Survey Procedure**

Survey data were gathered from public, private, and charter SHSs from October 28–31, 2019, after seeking permission and approval from their respective school administrators. For representation purposes, target student populations from one central SHS (urban) and one community SHS (rural) for the public school were combined to reflect the nature of the public schools in the municipality. Thereby, considering that the target population is composed of three different strata or subgroups, stratified random sampling was used, applying the Cochran sampling formula (Nguon, 2012). The total samples generated from the sampling frame was 248, with the following distribution of the research respondents by type of school: public school (69), state university (77), and private school (102). However, out of the 248 respondents surveyed, the valid response rate was only 245. The incomplete information provided by three respondents from the public secondary school disqualified them from inclusion in this study.

### **5.5. The Survey Questionnaire**

We employed a theoretically derived foundational model or top-down approach in developing our survey questionnaire (Cobern & Adams, 2020). Hence, survey validity is established by drawing on our research literature. For an external review of the questionnaire to establish further item effectiveness and validity, pretesting was conducted on three different SHS students. It consists of three parts: Part 1 asks Grade 12 students to supply the school they currently enroll in, Part 2 asks them to supply their breadwinner occupation, and Part 3 asks their families' highest educational attainment across three generations.

### **5.6. Data Analysis and Presentation**

The categorization of social classes into lower/working class, middle class, and upper class in this study is based on Bourdieu's notion of capital, wherein one's social status in society is constituted by economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital. Under such an assumption, a family may be positioned in the upper or middle class provided it is rated highly in any or a combination of the capitals. Conversely, the lack of such is tantamount to a family being classified as lower/working class.

The family breadwinner occupation was a proxy of Bourdieu's capital, relying mainly on the occupational name. As a side note, we deem it sufficient to consider the main family provider to study social class while acknowledging that some families may have employed husband and wife. Our further

justification for using a nonmonetary approach based on occupation in studying social class (i.e., excluding education and income in the equation) is that developing countries like the Philippines, unlike the U.S. and most Western nations, generally do not have low educational achievement and the economic capital in these settings does not automatically translate into the ways parents intervene in their children's schooling (Nguon, 2012). Accordingly, interventions of other variables, such as the extended family's collective efforts, come into play in children's education. Hence, in this respect, the likelihood that parental occupation (including status and authority) mediates the whole sphere of family relationships and influences children's education is thus greater than other variables, making it a reliable construct that can also explain the social dynamics in Philippine education and society.

Additionally, according to the Philippine Integrative Development Studies (PIDS), there is no fixed measure in classifying the middle class in the Philippines, which explains the dynamic nature of the social class (Albert et al., 2018). For instance, individuals in the upper bound of the lower class and those in the lower bound of the middle class may cross class boundaries owing to social mobility dynamics whereby families change occupational status and income levels from time to time (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2019).

Using our social class definitions based on Bourdieu's capital and considering the 1998 Office for National Statistics Classification of Occupations (Hill, 1999) and the Philippine Statistics Authority (2022) classification of occupation as a guide, we categorized the Grade 12 family breadwinner occupations including their frequency count to classify the SHS families into three social class classifications—lower/working class, middle class, and upper class.

Meanwhile, the analysis of the family school choices and implications to EPPP considers the family social class standing (e.g., upper class, middle class, lower/working class) and the type of school (e.g., private, public, charter school) attended by the research respondents, hence generating the distribution of social class by type of school through Microsoft Excel. Finally, the results are presented in percentages using multiple bar graphs for comparison.

### **5.7. Document Analysis as a Complementary Method**

According to Bowen (2009), "documents provide background and context ... and verification of findings from other data sources" (pp. 30-31). Hence, we used document analysis, "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents," as a complementary method of our survey data (Bowen, 2009, p. 27) to provide a background of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) governance that may have affected the EPPP, the SHS VP in particular.

We followed Altheide's process of document analysis: (1) setting inclusion criteria for documents, (2) collecting documents, (3) articulating key areas of analysis, (4) document coding, (5) verification, and (6) analysis (Wach et al., 2013). First, we set a guideline to choose only documents tackling Philippine EPPP and ARMM education governance. Second, we searched through Google

and the Scopus database entering the keywords *Philippine EPPP* and *ARMM education governance*. This process paved the way for selecting two international organization reports and one research article. Third, we read the chosen documents and identified details related to our study. Fourth, we coded the relevant document passages linked to our survey findings. Fifth, we reviewed our codes, ensuring their accuracy and reliability. Sixth and last, we analyzed the codes iteratively, taking into account our survey results to underscore EPPP implications in BARMM.

## 6. Results

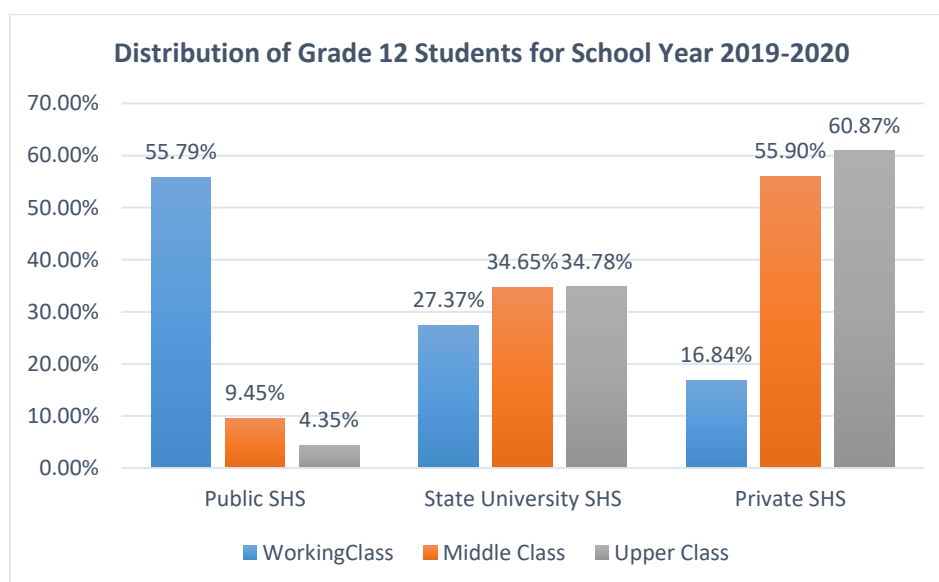
The 245 research participants are categorized according to three types of social class (see Table 3): lower/working class, middle class, and upper class. The following is their distribution: lower/working class, 95 or 38.8%; middle class, 127 or 51.8%; and upper class, 23 or 9.4%. Therefore, most Grade 12 senior high students come from middle-class families. Self-employed non-professionals, teachers, government employees, and police personnel constitute the bulk of this class. On the other hand, the majority in the lower/working class group are farmers and fishermen. Moreover, the upper class, dominated mainly by business proprietors and highly educated individuals with managerial positions in government and private institutions, is the least. Refer to Table 3 for the complete distribution of occupations of parents of the Grade 12 SHS students.

**Table 3: Distribution of occupations of parents (breadwinners) of the Grade 12 SHS students**

Social Class	Occupational Classification	Number
Lower/Working class	farmer	44
	fisherman	20
	vendor	10
	construction worker	2
	carpenter	4
	welder	1
	contractual worker	2
	company driver	8
	household helper	1
	tricycle driver	2
	utility	1
Subtotal		<b>95</b>
Middle class	self-employed non-professional	43
	teacher	26
	government employee	25
	police	13
	nurse	2
	local government official	3
	pharmacist	1
	pastor	1
	security guard	5
	foreman	3
	cashier	2
	guidance councilor	1

	bookkeeper	1
	office secretary	1
	Subtotal	<b>127</b>
Upper class	supervisor	5
	barangay chairman	2
	business proprietor	4
	school principal	3
	principal engineer	1
	company manager	1
	municipal accountant	1
	professor	2
	dean	1
	university director	1
	mayor	1
	dentist	1
	Subtotal	<b>23</b>
	Total	<b>245</b>

Around 4.35% of upper-class students enrolled in the public SHS, 34.78% in the state university SHS (charter school), and 60.87% in the private SHS (see Figure 2). The proportion of middle-class students attending public SHS, state university SHS, and private SHS were 9.45%, 34.65%, and 55.90%, respectively. Finally, 55.79% of the working class students are in the public SHS, 27.37% are in the state university SHS, and 16.84% are in the private SHS.



**Figure 2: Social class distribution in the Senior High Schools (SHSs) of Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, Philippines**

These results reveal that the public SHS gets the biggest attendance from the lower/working class, with only a few attendances from the middle and upper classes among the three different types of schools: public SHS, state university

SHS, and private SHS. On the contrary, the private SHS houses the most upper/middle-class SHS students among the three schools. On the other hand, among the three SHSs accounted for, the state university SHS obtains an almost equal share of Grade 12 students from the three social classes. However, the lower/working class is relatively lower.

## **7. Discussions and Implications to Educational Public-Private Partnership (EPPP)**

The greater percentage of the middle class compared to the lower/working class attending Grade 12 SHS entails disproportionate access and participation at this level of schooling, considering that the majority of the Philippine population comes from the lower class category (Baldwin, 2015; Termes et al., 2020). Notably, there is an apparent educational disadvantage among students whose parents are farmers and fishermen—among the poorest sectors in 2018, along with rural individuals, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2020). The advantage of the middle class and the disadvantage of the lower/working class in education in this study echo and support the findings of Ball and Gewirtz (1997), Lareau (2003), Sullivan (2002), and Reay (2018) on social class and education.

Based on the results, there is a class segregation in the Grade 12 SHSs in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, in the BARMM, Philippines. Most upper/middle class students are concentrated in the private and charter (state university) SHSs, whereas most lower/working class students are in the public SHS. Even when considering only one school type, for example, the public school, we can infer there is an occurrence of segregation among Grade 12 SHS students in the municipality. Along this vein, as Ayangco-Derramas (2022) pointed out, private schools in Tawi-Tawi performed better than public schools; the middle-class students are thus in an advantageous position compared to their lower/working-class counterparts in regard to accessing quality education. It goes without saying that there is a high-level education and social inequality in the municipality, reflective of Zamora and Dorado's (2015) finding about education inequality in the province of Tawi-Tawi. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2005) further pointed out the relationship between education inequality and education quality, such that the areas with high-level education inequality also have low-level education quality (Zamora & Dorado, 2015). This position may apply in this study as Hailaya (2014) showed regarding the case of Tawi-Tawi where it was found a low-level education quality in the province as indicated by students' low performance in national achievement tests and teachers' low-level assessment literacy.

The findings of this study have significant implications for EPPP (see Table 4) that paves the way for the K-12 SHS VP of the DepEd aimed at decongesting public schools through the participation of the private sector in the public education provision to improve education quality by increased family school choice on the part of the clientele as consumers and competition on the part of schools as education providers. Nonetheless, as evident in the results, the government voucher program does not forge diversity through increased

enrollment from the lower/working class in the participating private SHS in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, and address high education inequality (Zamora & Dorado, 2015) after four years of SHS implementation beginning School Year 2016-2017, which is consistent with Termes et al.'s (2020) findings regarding the ESC program (forerunner of the K-12 SHS VP): "ESC expansion [from 545, 027 grants in 1997 to 855, 372 in 2015] has not translated into an increase of enrollment in private education, in percentage terms" (p. 94). Accordingly, there is a high level of inequity in this municipality in BARMM regarding access to education quality offered by different types of SHSs. In its report, the World Bank (2011) states that ESC grantees distribution by region in the Philippines is not proportional, with the ARMM (now BARMM), where Tawi-Tawi is, having the lowest number of grantees. This matter can be attributed to either the private schools in the region having limited capacity to accommodate ESC grantees or, more probably, because many households could not afford to pay the "top up" or the difference between the government subsidy amount and the school tuition fees. Considering the inequality gap, the high poverty incidence in Tawi-Tawi, BARMM (DFAT Australia & World Bank, 2014; World Bank, 2011; Zamora & Dorado, 2015), and the high tuition fees collected by the private SHS considered in this study; therefore, most low-income families more preferred the public school or the charter school that offers good education with low tuition fees but with the stringent admission process. However, notably, based on the Grade 12 distribution by type of school, the charter school is closer to the ideal in terms of education access and student population diversity (i.e., almost equal in terms of the percentage of lower/working class, middle class, and upper class attending the charter school).

**Table 4: Document analysis results**

Source	Page	Code and Relevant Passage
1. The World Bank (2011). Philippines Private Provision, Public Purpose: A Review of the Government's Education Service Contracting Program	23	<i>Lowest growth rates in ESC slots in ARMM: Regions with the highest growth rates include the NCR ... CALABARZON, and Western Visayas, while regions with the lowest growth rates are ARMM, Zamboanga Peninsula, and MIMAROPA. Again the poorest regions also have the lowest growth rates in ESC slots, probably because few households can take up the slots due to their inability to pay for the difference between the subsidy amount and the tuition fees.</i>
2. DFAT Australia and World Bank (2014). Philippines: Making Education Spending Count for the Children of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao – A Public Expenditure & Institutional Review for ARMM Basic Education	16	<i>ARMM governance issues due to partial implementation of ARMM regional autonomy: Delays and partial implementation of the regional autonomy granted first by the 1989 creation of the ARMM, and revised via the "Final Peace Accord" and resulting "Expanded Organic Act" of 2001, have undermined the coherence of public expenditure management institutions. This incomplete devolution stems from both a failure to establish necessary legal codes and</i>



		<p>functional institutions to support the provisions of the Organic Act and a lack of capacity and compliance by the region with the fiduciary requirements of national government and principles of sound budget accountability.</p> <p>At the same time, there has been a tension between the nationwide decentralization process under the Local Government Code (RA 7160 of 1991) and regional devolution under RA 9054. These two frameworks have not been resolved coherently, resulting in ambiguity over the relationships and responsibilities of the ARMM regional government and other Local Government Units.</p>
<p>3. Termes et al. (2020). The development and dynamics of public-private partnerships in the Philippines' education: A counterintuitive case of school choice, competition, and privatization. <i>Educational Policy</i>, 34(1), 91-117.</p>	<p>94</p>	<p><i>Stagnation in private education enrollment amid the government's voucher program: Over time, the voucher program has grown exponentially from only 545,027 grants in 1997 to 855,372 in 2015 (FAPE [Fund for Assistance to Private Education] database). However, this ESC expansion has not translated into an increase of enrollment in private education, in percentage terms. In recent years, private sector enrollment has stagnated, contrasting with the rapid growth of public sector enrollment, particularly in the pre-primary and secondary levels.</i></p>

Being situated in the BARMM, the SHSs in this study are a particular case. However, it must be acknowledged that the education sector in BARMM has relative autonomy, just as the BARMM has political autonomy as a region within the Philippine state. As the EPPP emanated from the Philippine central government and was implemented down the line in the country's various regions, the setup of the BARMM, including its educational challenges, has to be scrutinized to offer an in-depth analysis of the education inequality affecting this part of the country.

The BARMM was only fully established in 2019, which means that, during this study period, the structure and governance of the ARMM (forerunner of the BARMM) were in operation; thereby, challenges in the region might have been in play in the SHS VP implementation. Accordingly, the nature of the ARMM as a layer of government mediating the Philippine central government and the local governments in the region became a challenge to education within the region (DFAT Australia & World Bank, 2014). In fact, there remained an unresolved tension between the "nationwide decentralization process under the Local Government Code (RA 7160 of 1991) and regional devolution under RA 9054" (DFAT Australia & World Bank, 2014, p. 16).

Although there was an established system to operationalize governance in ARMM, there were implementation issues in the autonomous government due to incoherence in the public expenditure management resulting from the “delays and partial implementation of the regional autonomy” (DFAT Australia & World Bank, 2014, p. 16). Hence, the disconnect in policy, plan, and budget: Budgeting, for instance, is fragmented with the budget originating from different sources (e.g., Department of Budget and Management [DBM], DepEd National, internal revenue allotment). This scenario makes educational planning in the region problematic. Furthermore, the ARMM had inadequate documentation of all its educational programs (e.g., personnel record system, enrollment rate including tracking of dropouts and out-of-school youth, families needing educational support) reported to the national offices, making the region difficult to deal with, especially on the part of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and the DepEd National that require sufficient data and credible reports before releasing government funds for educational programs. Such inadequacies in the region paved the way for irregularities and misguided planning, resulting in the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of education services. Hence, the autonomy of the ARMM is only theory and failing in practice.

The weak governance in ARMM has serious implications characterized by longstanding political and socioeconomic issues. The DFAT Australia and World Bank (2014) have shown that “Children in the ARMM have long suffered from the effects of underdevelopment, neglect, poor governance, and conflict. The proportion of impoverished families in the ARMM is the highest in the country, amounting to over twice the Philippines average” (“Executive Summary” section). Taking the case of Tawi-Tawi, where there is high inequality (Zamora & Dorado, 2015), it is likely that low socioeconomic status is the top reason for most lower/working-class families’ public SHS school choice for their children despite the promise of the SHS VP to allow them to enroll in private SHSs and decongest public SHSs. Our supposition is based on the World Bank’s (2011) report on the ESC program, the forerunner of the SHS VP, that noted: “The unaffordability of tuition fees of private schools could be the main reason why there are least ESC grantees in BARMM among all regions of the Philippines.”

Superseding the ARMM government is the new BARMM government in Bangsamoro created by virtue of Republic Act No. 11054. The BARMM hopes to address the governance issues of ARMM, including in education. Under BARMM, a new education system has been established – the MBHTE embodied in the Bangsamoro Autonomy Act No. 18, also known as the Bangsamoro Education Code of 2021 (Bangsamoro Parliament, 2021). Its education system has a parallel form of basic education, the public school system and the public madrasah system. Furthermore, it has specific provisions on alternative learning system, higher education, technical education and skills development, indigenous peoples’ education, and peace education. Finally, given the provisions of the 1987 Philippine constitution, the BARMM education system shall adhere to the principles of EPPP or PPP in education.

## 8. Conclusions

This study shows inequality in education access between at least the lower/working class and the middle class: Most of the Grade 12 SHS students in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, Philippines, come from affluent families. Furthermore, the middle and upper classes have a greater advantage in education as they have greater power of school choice compared with their lower/working-class counterparts. Furthermore, education inequality in the municipality is further compounded by inequality in access to the quality education offered by different types of schools: public SHS, state university SHS, and private SHS.

Therefore, the Philippine EPPP operating through the K-12 SHS VP, which was supposed to decongest public schools and foster school diversity, did not adequately achieve its primary intention: This study shows class segregation in basic education, wherein most low-income families choose a public school, and high-income families choose a private school; although, interestingly, charter schools almost reached an equilibrium in balancing the school participation of students from different social class backgrounds. Simply put, the EPPP failed to balance efficiency and equity in the schooling system as parents did not have adequate power of school choice, and schools—particularly the public and the private SHSs in this study—were not encouraged to compete to attract students in the education market. Hence, there is an inequity in which the trend is toward segregation rather than cohesion.

The ARMM EPPP gaps are attributed to ARMM's weak governance system and inefficient service delivery that drive high poverty incidence and hinder low-income families from enjoying private education provision through the K-12 SHS VP. On the other hand, the limited capacity of private schools to accommodate public school students is similarly situated. The inadequate regional regulation of the private education provisions results in the families' decreased power of school choice, defeating the SHS VP's main purpose.

## 9. Recommendations

For the new BARMM government to succeed, it is recommended to address the local divisions over the Bangsamoro Organic Law, improve the state capacity in BARMM, and ensure national government support to the new regional government (Cook, 2018) to address the systemic problems (e.g., poverty, socioeconomic disparity) in the region hindering equitable access and participation in education through EPPP. When the autonomous regional system is improved, and the poverty rate is reduced accordingly, parents will have greater power of school choice (e.g., afford private school education), which will lead to the achievement of the SHS VP's intention to decongest public schools.

Education authorities in BARMM should closely regulate and supervise the private schools in the region to ensure the affordability of their education provision, especially for students who receive government funding intending to obtain private education. Public schools must improve their education services to attract more students from different social class backgrounds. Charter schools (e.g., the state university in this study) should strive to balance their student

population with equal participation of students from different social and cultural backgrounds. Additionally, these school institutions may adopt a mechanism or policy to promote diversity along social class, ethnic, and religious lines among administrators, faculty, staff, and students.

Finally, government and education authorities should consider increasing the voucher program amount to support low-income students and raise their power of school choice, enhancing program monitoring and strengthening accountability among education stakeholders. Besides, creating more jobs and livelihood programs for low-income families is imperative for government institutions.

## 10. Limitations

Given this study's parameters with samples taken from three different types of schools in a specified school year in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi, the results may apply only to these schools and not to others. Therefore, caution should be practiced in making generalizations based on the results of this study.

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