

## EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF LONG HOLIDAY VACATIONS ON ELEMENTARY LEARNERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

*by:*

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In the Philippines, long holiday vacations are an integral part of the academic calendar, providing students with a break from the structured demands of school. These extended holidays—often spanning several weeks—bring benefits and challenges that can significantly affect elementary learners' development and academic performance. This article examines the implications of long holiday vacations on Filipino students, considering factors such as academic retention, social development, and mental well-being.

Long holiday vacations offer essential time for mental rest. The school year can be overwhelming for elementary students, with academic pressures, extracurricular activities, and social dynamics. According to a study by the Department of Education (DepEd), breaks help alleviate stress and reduce burnout, allowing children to return to school refreshed and ready to learn (DepEd, 2022). This mental rejuvenation is crucial for fostering a positive attitude toward education. The holidays allow families to spend quality time together, vital for children's emotional development. Engaging in family activities through travel or simple gatherings helps improve children's communication skills and emotional intelligence. Research from the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) indicates that children who experience familial solid ties tend to perform better academically and socially (PIDS, 2021). This quality time nurtures a sense of security and belonging in young learners. During long breaks, children can engage in informal learning experiences that may not be available in the classroom. Activities such as visiting historical sites, participating in cultural festivals, or even helping in

community service initiatives expose learners to real-world applications of their education. A report by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts highlights the importance of cultural engagement in promoting holistic education (NCCA, 2020). Such experiences can ignite curiosity and foster a lifelong love for learning.

One of the most concerning impacts of long holidays is the potential for learning loss, often called the "summer slide." Research shows extended breaks can lead to declining academic skills, particularly in mathematics and reading (Cooper et al., 2000). The challenge becomes even more pronounced in the Philippines, where academic breaks can stretch for weeks. Teachers often re-teach material at the start of the school year, which can hinder progress (Hernandez, 2022). Children thrive on structure, and long holidays can disrupt their daily routines. The absence of a consistent schedule may lead to difficulties in re-adjusting to school life. Educational psychologist Dr. Maria Santos notes that routines help children develop self-discipline and focus, which can be compromised during extended breaks (Santos, 2023). This disruption could appear as behavioral problems and decreased motivation when classes resume. Holidays give many kids more free time, so they use digital gadgets to pass the time. While technology can offer educational content, excessive screen time is linked to adverse health outcomes, such as obesity and disrupted sleep patterns. Concerns regarding the long-term impacts of increased screen time on kids' health and social skills have been voiced by the Philippine Pediatric Society (Philippine Pediatric Society, 2021). Parents are crucial and decisive in regulating their kids' screen time during breaks.

Several strategies can be employed to maximize the benefits of long holiday breaks while minimizing their disadvantages: Promoting organized learning activities during breaks can support academic skill maintenance. Parents might plan science experiments, arts and crafts projects, or reading sessions that encourage learning entertainingly and interestingly. The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) claims these activities can reduce learning loss (SEAMEO, 2021). Families can also use

holiday travel to explore educational destinations like museums or historical sites. These outings enrich students' knowledge and create memorable experiences that enhance their understanding of culture and history.

Setting limits on screen time is essential. Parents should support sports, outdoor play, and other non-screen-related activities to foster social connection and physical health. If technology use is balanced, kids can learn digitally while forming good habits. Parents will feel more deliberate and thoughtful in their parenting decisions due to this emphasis on balance, which will protect the general well-being of their kids.

Extended holidays in the Philippines present opportunities and challenges for elementary school students. These breaks allow for informal learning, improve family ties, and offer vital mental health advantages, but they can also cause learning loss and disturb routines. Families and educators may help children maximize their free time by implementing policies that support structured learning, foster family involvement, and regulate screen time. Determining the correct balance will promote Filipino primary students' general growth and academic achievement.

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