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Grandfamilies in Vietnam: Grandparents' Engagements in Grandchildren's Academic Performance at School

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GRANDFAMILIES IN VIETNAM:
GRANDPARENTS' ENGAGEMENTS IN GRANDCHILDREN'S ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE AT SCHOOL

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Sociology
Western Kentucky University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the degree
Master of Arts

By
Nga Nguyen

August 2018

GRANDFAMILIES IN VIETNAM:
GRANDPARENTS' ENGAGEMENTS IN GRANDCHILDREN'S
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT SCHOOL

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>List of Figures</i>	vii
<i>List of Tables</i>	viii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	1
Background of Vietnamese Education.....	3
Purpose of Study	5
Significance of the Study	6
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW	9
Grandkin - Educational Outcomes.....	9
Children’s Emotional and Behavioral Problems.....	11
Grandparents’ Stressors	13
Relationship between Grandchildren & Grandparents - Perception of Their Relation	15
CHAPTER III BACK GROUND OF VIETNAMESE SOCIETY	17
Cultural Context.....	17
Kinship Network in Vietnamese Families	18
CHAPTER IV THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	20
Sociocultural Theory.....	20
CHAPTER V METHODOLOGY	23
Recruitment of Respondents.....	23

The Interview Process.....	24
Measurements	25
<i>CHAPTER VI RESULTS</i>	26
Family Background and Patterns of Grandchildren’s Academic Performing	26
Family background	29
Grandparents’ Engagement in Grandchildren’s Academic Performance.....	33
Grandparents’ age.....	37
Grandparents’ perspectives on children’s education	38
The Relationship with Homeroom Teachers and Their Involvement in Children’s Schooling	40
The Role of Kinship in Vietnamese Grandfamilies	44
Positive Role Models for Grandchildren	46
Parents are roles models for children.....	46
The cousins - powerful roles models for children	48
Additional Variables	50
Geographic regions	50
Parent’s absence in children’s lives	51
Timeline	52
Summary.....	52
<i>CHAPTER VII DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION</i>	55
Theoretical Implication.....	64

Methodological Limitations.....	65
Future Research	65
The Interview Guide	68
<i>APPENDIX</i>	73

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Who is primarily in charge of their custodial grandchildren's education	26
Figure 2: Grandchildren's level of education	27
Figure 3: Grandchildren's Academic Performance	27
Figure 4: Grandfamily's social capital network.....	50

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Classification of social and occupational status	30
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In Vietnam, the number of grandparents who become full-time surrogate parents to their grandchildren has significantly increased. When parenting is left to grandparents, they play the same role as biological parents. They significantly affect the educational functioning, developmental outcomes, and well-being of their grandchildren. Using data from in-depth interviews with 16 participants who are raising their grandchildren, the current study provides insight into children's education in the grandparents-headed households in Vietnam. The more grandparents are involved in their grandchildren's educational process, the more likely their grandchildren are to achieve academic success. I have found that there is a strong relationship between grandparents' age, as well as their perspectives/values on education, and how they engage in children's academic performance. My study highlights the importance of transmitting cultural and social capital which children primarily absorb in family settings. Sociocultural theory has maintained that custodial grandparents' cultural and social resources, which they transmit to their grandchildren, significantly affect their educational progress. In Vietnamese grandfamilies, grandparents are not a primary learning resource for their custodial grandchildren. However, they can provide external resources such as the relationship with homeroom teachers and kinship as social capital. The present qualitative study

should be seen as laying the groundwork for future research. Social capital theory is recommended as the theoretical framework for future research.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In Vietnam, the number of grandparents who become full-time surrogate parents to their grandchildren has significantly increased (Harris, Wilfong, Nguyen & Kim, 2017). Grandparents are not only a vulnerable population due to age, frailty, and the degraded ability to generate income, but they are also vital to the survival of younger generations. Grandparents have always had an essential role in family life. Over the past 50 years, changes in family structure have led to diversity in family forms altering how families bring up their children (Baker, Silverstein & Putney, 2008). Due to divorce, family violence, labor export, and parents' death, parenting is often left to grandparents. Increasing number of grandparents have to take over the parental role from child's parents and become the care providers for their grandchildren (Harris et al., 2017; Ochiltree, 2006).

This phenomenon has led to a new type of household, called "grandfamily" or "skipped generation family," which is made up of grandparents and grandchildren only. Children in these families are called "Grandkin" and may be found among all religions, ethnicities, and socioeconomic classes (Fuller-Thomson & Minkler, 2000). Many researchers also use other terms to identify this circumstance: Grandparents Offering Love and Devotion (GOLD), Grandparents as Parents (GAP), Grandparents as Surrogate Parents (GASP), Grandparents as Caregivers, and Raising our Children's Kids: An Intergenerational Network of Grandparents (ROCKING) (Doucette-Dudman & LaCure, 1996; Edwards, 1996a).

In Vietnam, instead of foster care, there is a greater likelihood that children will be raised by their grandparents if their parents are unable to do so. In terms of culture, Vietnamese people value family and biological lineage. Grandparents expect their descendants are going to not only carry their genes and their culture to future generations, but also take care of them as they age. Moreover, except for parents, grandparents in Vietnam are often the closest family members to children. Therefore, they are willing to undertake parental responsibility for their grandchildren because of the biological connection (Edwards, 1998). Also, grandparents feel motivated to watch out for their grandchildren and guide them to succeed in life. However, being a primary caregiver not only brings “a great deal of responsibility but also financial, lifestyle and health issues for the grandparents” (Ochiltree, 2006, p. 4).

Grandparents who raise grandchildren play a vital role as primary caregivers. The emerging issue of grandparents providing child care is examined with a focus on care of children’s development. Grandparents significantly affect school functioning and the well-being of their grandchildren (Backhouse, 2009). Moreover, grandparents who raise their grandchildren also influence the development of their grandchildren in the educational environment (Baker, Silverstein & Putney, 2008). During the past decade, previous studies have found that children in grandfamilies often experience not only behavioral and emotional adjustment (Edwards, 1998; Weber & Waldrop, 2000), but also problems regarding school-related functioning. Additionally, interventions are essential to improve their educational outcomes (Edwards & Daire, 2006).

The school age is an especially critical stage of socialization in which children start to experience many different agents of socialization beyond family such as school, peers, and media, etc. However, a family is still a fundamental place where children are nurtured, taught the norms or customs expected and accepted in the family structure and in the society in which they live (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Families have the most direct and lasting impact on children's learning and their development of social competence. To attain higher achievements in school and exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior, children need adults' involvement to make them feel more comfortable in new settings (Adams & Baronberg, 2005). In early childhood, care providers need to build strong relationships with children that engage them in every aspect of their children's lives (National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, 2003). Therefore, for grandchildren who lost their parents, grandmothers and grandfathers play a key role in their development. They significantly affect their educational functioning, developmental outcomes, and well-being of their grandchildren (Edwards & Daire, 2006). Their engagement can strengthen a tie with children and motivate children's positive attitudes (Adams & Baronberg, 2005).

Background of Vietnamese Education

The Vietnamese have a great respect for learning, inherited in part from their long domination by the Chinese. Vietnam recognizes education as a national priority (World Bank Group, 2018). Education in Vietnam is overseen by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), and it is an extensive network of state-run schools for students from roughly four years old to college-age. The system consists of five categories:

kindergarten, primary, secondary, upper-secondary (i.e., high school), and higher level, with nationally administered exit and entrance examinations between each. The upper-secondary level divides into two types: high school, where students must pass the entrance exam and supplementary school, “*Trường bổ túc*”. Additionally, designated schools known as High schools for the gifted, “*Trường trung học phổ thông chuyên*”, are regarded as prestigious and demand high entrance examination results. If a student’s result is not high enough to gain admission into a high school, he/she can attend supplementary school, as the minimum requirement is only to finish middle school.

The educational reform in the 1980s created a profound change in the Vietnamese education system. According to the results of my previous study, “*Parents’ perspective on the reformation of elementary textbooks in Vietnam,*” the reformed educational program was “heavy” and “overloading” for school-age children. Parents believed that their children might be overwhelmed with the reformed program (Nguyen, 2013).

Parents send their children to extracurricular classes (evening and weekend classes) and expect that they can learn more rather than attending regular classes only (Nguyen, 2013). Since then, extracurricular classes after school have grown in popularity, especially in the urban areas. Students attend Math, Literature, and English classes or other extracurricular classes after regular school hours. Extracurricular classes have become a tradition in Vietnamese education. Two ultimate goals of extracurricular classes are getting good grades at school and being better prepared for the important examinations, such as the graduation exam or the entrance exam to high school and college.

University admission is based on the scores achieved in the entrance examination. High school graduates need high scores to be admitted to universities. Securing a place in a public university is considered a major step toward a successful career, especially for those from rural areas or disadvantaged families. For Vietnamese students, getting into a public university is a life changing event. The pressure and stress on the candidates, therefore, remains notably high. Generally, candidates take three exams for the fixed group of subjects they choose. There are many fixed groups of subjects from A to D and V with three subjects in each group. The entrance examination is much harder than what students study at schools. Therefore, extracurricular classes are always the best, and sometimes the only, option to improve the score.

Purpose of Study

Education builds a significant foundation in a child's developmental process. Especially in Vietnam, where the number of skipped generation families has increased considerably, educational outcomes of grandchildren who are raised by grandparents should be of more concern. Therefore, this phenomenon invokes a question: Do Vietnamese grandparents' instruction and involvement affect their grandchildren's academic performance at school? When the nuclear family breaks down, children may experience social-emotional and school-related problems as a result (Edwards & Daire, 2006). Therefore, grandparents have to keep track of their grandchildren's learning, motivate them to improve their academic performance at school, and help them with homework. However, grandparents may not be familiar with the current educational

curriculum or they may be confused by it, which may make it difficult for them to assist their grandchildren with their homework.

Through the interviews of 16 grandparents who have taken on the full-time care of grandchildren when their own children have been unable to parent them, the current study has two major goals: (1) to develop a deeper understanding of children's development who are raised by their grandparents, especially in education, and (2) to understand grandparents' roles in their custodial grandchildren's studies and how it affects their educational outcomes.

Significance of the Study

The loss of parents often has significant negative implications for children. Much of the literature compares grandfamilies with two-parent families. Children who have lost both parents would be expected to perform worse than children with two parents.

Therefore, the emerging questions are: 1) What additional challenges do grandfamilies face; and 2) What are grandfamilies doing to help children successful in the face of the loss of parents.

In Vietnam, there are several of limitations on grandfamily-related research, especially when it is analyzed in the Vietnamese social and cultural context. Moreover, very little research has examined the factors affecting grandchildren's learning. Due to the social context, the grandparent-headed households are a special type in Vietnam. Both grandparent and grandchildren are vulnerable groups, but they do not receive much attention. There are several reasons: (1) Grandfamilies in Vietnam are not considered a type of foster family. Vietnamese grandparents are supposed to take over full

responsibility of taking care of children if parents are unable to do so. (2) In fact, there is a lack of clarity in Vietnamese laws about the recognition of the parental role of grandparents, and they do not have any legal rights or obligations toward their grandkin. (3) In contrast to the American system, foster families are not common in Vietnamese culture and society. Many foster parents are foreigners who have come adopt the Vietnamese orphans.

For these reasons, I believe my study has the potential to be a significant contribution to the literature on family study and child development. The findings of this qualitative study will provide insights into custodial grandchildren's issues including age, stress, or mental health. The research is designed to explain and discuss this problem in Vietnam, where the number of children raised by grandparents is growing significantly. My study focuses on the importance of grandparents' involvement in children's homework and their effect on their grandchild's academic performance and educational outcomes.

Examining some more basic issues is also essential (e.g., child development, the role of adults or family-related problems). To adequately illustrate grandparents' role in grandchildren's education, the current research looks beyond demographic characteristics to see these individuals, their perceptions, and their social experience, from their own perspectives. To provide information and assist in developing and implementing policies and programs, the findings of this study will call attention to grandparents who face challenges in raising their grandchildren. In addition, they may motivate them to be more energetic and community minded to support and help their custodial grandchildren with

homework. The results of this study should provide a fresh and thorough picture of grandfamilies, presented in light of several themes and a broad theoretical framework.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

As the number of grandfamilies rises, there is an increasing concern surrounding grandparents' parental roles. Grandparents may not only take care of grandchildren as a form of support they provide for their adult's children, but also be a great learning resource for grandchildren. Additionally, past research has shown that grandparents significantly affect children's educational outcomes in the multigenerational families in Asian societies.

Unfortunately, very few studies have been conducted in Vietnam on grandfamilies as well as the effect of such family environment on children's development. Therefore, I am going to utilize findings from research on grandfamilies in the United States and China. Since the Chinese culture and tradition are very similar to those of Vietnam, the results can be useful in my analysis. Moreover, the literature on grandfamilies in the United States will be mentioned and compared with that of Vietnam and China to offer a more comprehensive picture. The literature review will conclude by examining custodial grandchildren's development based on aspects such as schooling function, emotional/behavioral problems, financial status, and cultural context.

Grandkin - Educational Outcomes

The research on grandfamilies has investigated the school/learning-related functioning of custodial grandchildren. Analyzing data from the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study, Warren and Hauser (1997) reported that grandparents significantly influenced "their grandchildren's educational attainment or occupational status" (p.12). With the same data, Jæger (2012) illustrated that there was a direct correlation between

grandparents' education and their grandchildren's achievements at school. However, this correlation was not present in low-income families. Investigating a nationally representative sample of rural children from the 2002 Chinese Household Income Project (CHIP), Zeng and Xie (2014) suggested that grandparents' education in skipped-generation households and parental education in a nuclear family had a similarly profound effect on the children's learning outcomes. Additionally, living with grandparents reduces the likelihood of children dropping out of school. Nonetheless, this effect varies substantially with the education of custodial grandparents. Grandparents may contribute directly to children's educational achievement by helping them with homework as well as providing discipline and supervision (Chen, Liu, & Mair, 2011).

On the other hand, several studies on United States families show different results. Some studies illustrated that many children in this type of family were incompetent in cognitive skills, reading, and math skills (Stern, 2009). In the Sawyer & Dubowitz (1994) study, more than 30% of custodial children (including children in Grandfamilies and Kinship care) exhibited learning disabilities, mental retardation, and emotional disturbance that negatively affected their school functioning. There was also a high degree of grade failure among custodial children. Two-thirds of the children had repeated a grade (Sawyer & Dubowitz, 1994). Many children in grandfamilies and kinship care were provided case managers by social service agencies (Child Welfare, 2012). In another study by Dubowitz and Sawyer (1994), more than 30% of the students living in kinship care (including grandfamilies) were reported by teachers to be unmotivated, disobey class rules, and demonstrate objectionable behaviors at school. More than half of the children had below average performance at school due to

deficiencies in attention and concentration skills. Apparently, these characteristics are integral to learning and academic achievements. Missing these attributes, children often fail in their classes (Edwards & Daire, 2006).

However, these studies neglect the role of selection. These children have experienced the loss of their parents, considered a negative effect on their educational outcomes. They are more likely to face challenges that their peers do not.

Children's Emotional and Behavioral Problems

Due to the loss of parents or their absence in children's lives, children are more likely to encounter negative life experiences, or emotional and behavioral problems, which is one reason that influences grandparents to take on the parental role. Moreover, grandchildren who must adjust to living with grandparents, are more likely to exhibit social-emotional distress that leads to an undesirable impact on their school-related functioning (Grant & Kucera, 1998).

In this type of family, it was reported that grandparents have to deal with children's developmental, physical, behavioral, academic, and emotional problems that challenge and stress them. Some of these issues include depression, anxiety, health problems, learning disabilities, poor school performance, and aggression (Minkler et al., 1997; Smith & Palmieri, 2007). Using the Child Behavior Checklist-Teacher Report Form (TRF; Achenbach, 1991), Edwards' quantitative research examined the grandchildren from low-income schools through teachers' perceptions. The findings suggested that according to teachers' perceptions, grandchildren are more likely to

display emotional and behavioral problems, and many of them exhibit disorder and anxious behaviors that directly affected their school performance (Edwards, 2006).

At different ages, custodial grandchildren encounter various problems. Concern for adolescents who are living with custodial grandparents has grown because they are more likely to exhibit poor emotional and behavioral patterns. Accessing data from *Welfare, Children, and Families: A Three-City Study*, Pittman (2007) suggests three reasons that contribute to this problem. Firstly, grandparents are “aging and encountering a challenge to monitor and set limits on these children” (p. 108). Secondly, their parents’ absence may leave them a question of who they are, leading to “depression or delinquent activity” (Pittman, 2007, p. 109). Lastly, adolescence is not an easy time for children and caregivers. It is a period of active growth and development - physical, sexual, social and emotional. There are significant variations between the stage of onset and the attainment of full maturity.

In other research, Pittman and Boswell used the same data as in the above study. They illustrated that very young grandchildren (about ages 2 to 6) had a similar emotional functioning (both externalizing and internalizing behaviors) to other children, but lagged behind their peers in learning (Pittman & Boswell, 2007, p. 31).

There are three primary reasons why they may face these problems. The first one is that custodial grandchildren may experience substance abuse, child abuse, and neglect, teenage pregnancy, death, illness, parents’ divorce, incarceration, or HIV-AIDS (Hayslip et al., 1998). Parents’ absence often makes grandchildren feel hurt and upset. The second reason is that grandparents face numerous challenges as caregivers, which prevent them from effectively educating their grandchildren. Another reason is that the grandparent-

grandchild relationship also affects grandchildren's psychological development. Due to the generation gap, grandchildren may also feel disconnected from their grandparent caregivers (Smith & Palmieri, 2007).

Grandparents' Stressors

Along with their grandchildren's problems, custodial grandparents also have a range of disadvantages including "sickness, deficiency in desire for the parenting role, decline in energy level, and old age" (Minkler, Fuller-Thomson, Miller, & Driver, 1997). These problems may limit grandparents' capacities to help their grandchildren succeed in school. For grandparents, raising a second family at an advanced age is usually an exhausting experience (Minkler et al., 1997). Although the relationship between grandparent and grandchild involves a biological linkage, grandparents often have disadvantages when placed in the parental role. "Custodial grandparents face a wide array of stressors such as health problem, financial and social challenges of becoming parents a second time around" (Ochiltree, 2006, p.4).

Financial burden

Grandparents' role as primary caregivers to their grandchildren is usually financially challenging, especially for informal caregivers (Hayslip, Herrington, Glover, & Pollard, 2013). Financial resources can be crucial for children's chances in school. Limited data are available on Vietnamese grandfamilies. Thus, I review the literature on the grandparent-headed families in the United States. The few studies have found that there are many American low-income grandfamilies, and in many of those the grandchildren live in poverty. The rate of grandparent caregivers living below the poverty

line (19%) is more significant than that other types of families with children (14%; see the U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). Low-income grandparents also seek proximal relatives' supports, but these are seldom adequate due to the burdens in their relatives' lives (Burton, 1992).

Analyzing the results from a survey of eighty-three grandparents, Conway's study indicated that one-fifth of grandparents have incomes that fall below the poverty line. There is 49% unemployment rate for grandmothers and 34% for grandfathers who are raising their grandchildren. The average income for the grandparent-headed households is less than 20,000 USD (Conway, 2004, p. 17). A major reason is that many grandmothers or grandfathers give up working outside the home to raise their grandchildren, and end up losing income as well as the less "tangible benefits of employment such as better health and less parenting stress" (Musil, Schrader, & Mutikani, 2000). Indeed, many grandparents spend a sizable proportion of their income on rent (Fuller-Thomson & Minkler, 2003). In Vietnam, the retirement age is 55 for females and 60 for males (Trading Economics, 2016) and affording grandchildren a complete life with a small retirement pension is difficult for grandparents.

Social challenges

Some literature suggests grandparents who are informal caregivers to grandchildren face more challenges in accessing health care and social service due to "a lack of legal custody" (Gibson & Singh, 2010), which is a reason many children in grandparent-headed household have problems registering for school (Silverstein & Vehvilainen, 2000). Furthermore, 33% of custodial children lack health insurance (Kirby & Kaneda, 2002). Accordingly, grandparents are probably unable to afford their custodial

grandchildren optimum care, which directly influences children's well-being. Social security benefits and public assistance does not reach 90% custodial grandparents (Dellmann-Jenkins, Blackemeyer & Olesh, 2002).

Health problems

Several cross-sectional studies found that grandparents who play a direct parenting role in caring for their custodial grandchildren exhibited worse physical health than their non-caregiver counterparts (Hughes, Waite, Lapierrrem & Luo, 2007), and younger custodial grandparents have a higher probability of experiencing distress in the parental role than the older ones (Sand & Goldberg-Glen, 2000). Some custodial grandparents face several disadvantages due to their old age and physical and mental well-being. Previous quantitative studies have found that grandparents who undertake parental responsibility also experience physical and emotional problems that weaken their well-being (Minkler & Fuller-Thomson, 2001). They are less likely to have sufficient energy to assist children with schooling and learning.

Relationship between Grandchildren & Grandparents - Perception of Their Relation

Close grandparent-grandchild relationships have implications for grandchildren's well-being. Custodial grandparents and grandchildren who are living together often feel close to each other (Goodman, 2007; Weber & Waldrop, 2000). However, the grandparent-grandchild relationship may be negatively affected when children have physical, emotional or behavioral difficulties (Dolbin- MacNab & Keiley, 2006; Goodman, 2007). Moreover, challenges in this relationship may derive from

grandparents' psychological distress and social stressors as they experience both the roles of traditional grandparents and parents (Landry-Meyer & Newman, 2004; Fuller-Thomson & Minkler, 2000). Time is a necessary factor, because the longer grandparents and their children live together, the closer they become. In Dobbin-MacNab & Keiley's investigation (2009), grandchildren reported that they would like to develop a close relationship with their grandparents and receive their grandparents' love and support. They said, "their grandparents' love and stability have allowed them to succeed in school, stay out of trouble, and develop healthy morals and religious values" (Dobbin-MacNab & Keiley, 2009, p. 170).

Additionally, the literature from China supports the position that the grandparents-grandchildren relationship is a significant factor in young children's social competence (Li et al., 2016). Designing a grandparents-grandchildren relationship scale, these researchers evaluated the relationship of grandparents-grandchildren on six dimensions including intimacy, direction-sharing, avoidance, conflict-restriction, affirmation, and satisfaction. The results suggest that while intimacy and direction-sharing may predict positive grandparent-grandchildren relationship and enhance young children's social competence, avoidance and conflict-restriction may negatively affect children's social engagement. According to Shalhevet, Jo-Pei & Ann B (2009), grandchildren often benefit from grandparents' socio-cultural resources. Grandparents provide considerable emotional, financial, and informational support to grandchildren (2009). As a result, grandparents influence the development of young children's social competence.

CHAPTER III

BACK GROUND OF VIETNAMESE SOCIETY

Cultural Context

In many countries, “the cultural context is such that extended family and multigenerational structures are more the norms” (Edwards & Ray, 2010, p. 5). In the Asian tradition, the extended household with multiple generations living under the same roof and grandparent-headed families are common (Edwards and Ray, 2010). The association between multigenerational influences and children’s outcomes is a crucial topic for research. Multigenerational effects on grandchildren in Asia are more significant than in the West because the extended family is so common in these societies. Within these multigenerational family structures, grandparents are often expected to care for the children while the parents are absent, because in the Vietnamese tradition, carrying their genes forward to future generations is an important family role. Additionally, adult offspring are also expected to be responsible for their parents’ and grandparents’ well-being, especially when they get older or retire. For parents in Asian cultures, the responsibility of providing childcare during a child's development stages is taken very seriously.

Secondly, in many Asian nations, grandparents’ taking care of their grandchildren is more a matter of tradition and honor rather than of financial ability. According to traditional the Vietnamese mindset, multigenerational households are the rule rather than the exception. Since Vietnam is representative country of the Asian mindset and culture, significant cultural differences exist between the roles of Asian and American grandparents. For example, Americans almost universally agree that grandparents should

not interfere in their children's lives. That is a strange concept for many Asian families, who may not observe boundaries the same way that Americans do. They often engage in most parts of the children's lives.

The family structure can explain why the foster care system in Vietnam is different from the system in the U.S. and Western countries and why grandfamilies are not supposed to be foster families in Vietnam. Children who lost their parents have other opportunities to be legally adopted. However, taking care of grandchildren is customary for grandparents if something happens to a child's parents such as death or divorce. Indeed, if a child still has a grandmother or grandfather, it is more likely that they would be informal care providers who take over full responsibility to raise up the child without legal custody.

Regarding the cultural context, as surrogate parenting, grandparents who are not prepared for the role of surrogate parents are more likely to experience more stress than grandparents who are expected to raise their grandchildren (Emick & Hayslip, 1999). For instance, Asian grandparents are often active in child care and household tasks and have a close relationship with their grandchildren. They typically have a proper preparation for the situation; therefore, they feel less stress and are more motivated to continue taking care of the grandchildren and performing household tasks.

Kinship Network in Vietnamese Families

Like an individual belonging to and self-identifying with groups, a family (or a household) also has the sense of belonging in communities, or specifically, the "relatives" community. One of them is kinship network, a group of people having shared norms,

values, and perspectives. As Radcliffe-Brown (1941) pointed out more than 60 years ago, “the subject of kinship has occupied a special and prominent position in anthropology.”

In the simplest definition, kinship is the relationship among people who are related to each other by real, putative or fictive consanguinity (Fox, 1967). According to Harris (1990), the nature of kinship is demonstrated not only by biological relations or kin terms, but also by social relations. Kinship relations show “the network of relationships (that) bind individuals together in the web of kinship.”

In Vietnamese tradition, the kinship network plays a crucial role in family life. Most Vietnamese families have a close kinship. This is especially true for the previous generation who went through the fierce war. They often connect their family and their children to relatives. Vietnamese people have a famous idiom about kinship: “*Một giọt máu đào hơn ao nước lã*” - “Blood is thicker than water.” Metaphorically, it means that even a long-distance relative is closer and more important than friends or acquaintance who are not lineage.

Kinship is valued as a formal relationship that Vietnamese people always respect. The families in a kinship network are connected to each other through the annual ancestor worship and share some same values. Traditional Vietnamese retain much of their long-established customs and values.

CHAPTER IV

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The theoretical perspective for this study is derived from sociocultural approaches. Theoretical considerations in the current study offer a deeper understanding of interpersonal bonding in grandparent-headed households. Also, the theoretical framework allows for an expanded view of grandparent-headed families and grandchildren's development in Vietnamese social-cultural context.

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory offers an insight into what society contributes to individual development. Suggesting that human learning is mostly a social process, this approach emphasizes "the social and individual processes in the co-construction of knowledge" (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p.192). Additionally, sociocultural theory explores how cultural beliefs and attitudes affect family members and where instruction and learning take place. According to Vygotsky (1978), children's cognitive development occurs in social interaction. People's cognitive abilities as "a tool of intellectual adaption" allow children to use their biological constraints to adapt to the society and the culture they live. Moreover, language and other cultural tools can mediate psychological functioning. Social and cultural norms are more likely to promote children's learning. Interaction with others (caregivers, siblings, extended family members, neighbors, teachers, and peers) profound affects how children develop. For instance, with adults' guidance, children can perform more complex tasks such as solving problems requiring critical or logical thinking.

Moreover, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory can guide this current study as an overarching frame to explore social and cultural resources that define cultural and behavioral codes (Kraaykamp and van Eijck, 2010). Cultural resources can explain the way custodial grandparents guide their grandchildren with their homework and academic performance at school. Grandparents' roles in a family go beyond promoting and enforcing norms that lead to success in grandchildren's socialization. Grandparents' life experiences, role construction, funds of knowledge, and social network can affect the way they educate grandchildren.

Grandparents with many cultural resources are more likely to help their children with schooling and learning. They inspire a desire for learning and teach their children the importance of higher education. Furthermore, there is a positive correlation between grandparents' education and children's cultural socialization. Literature demonstrates that the educational level of parents has a positive correlation with children's academic achievements (De Graaf and Ganzeboom, 1993) and parental practices can cultivate a positive effect on children's learning outcomes (Cheadle, 2008; De Graaf et al., 2000; Roksa and Potter, 2011). These findings regarding cultural resources can be generalized to grandparents. Grandchildren can be motivated and encouraged to do well in school or even taught and instructed by grandparents (Erickson et al., 2009). According to Coleman (1988), cultural resources can be shared among family members through social interaction. Through communication, the children in the family may internalize the importance of learning and schooling from the adults (grandparents). By helping children with homework, grandparents can engage in conversations with their children and convey

their knowledge and skills. Also, a strong and close tie between grandparents and children was more likely to promote children in education (Coleman, 1988).

CHAPTER V

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is qualitative; the results are based on in-depth interviewing. The present study investigates the lived experience of 16 grandparents ages 55 to 76 (grandfathers or grandmothers) who are living with and taking on the full-time care of grandchildren. The grandchildren are school-age students. I conducted interviews in Hanoi - the capital city of Vietnam and Haiphong - the biggest harbor city. The interview guide included questions on demographic information and child and family functioning.

Data gathering and data analysis was designed to answer the following questions: (1) Do grandparents guide their grandchildren through studying at home? (2) Does their engagement play a crucial role in their children's learning? (3) What challenges do grandparents face when helping children with their homework? (4) Does the period of living together affect their relationship? (5) Does it influence their children's academic performances? (6) What are the other factors that also affect their school performance?

Recruitment of Respondents

A purposive sampling procedure was carried out in two big cities in North Vietnam: Hanoi - the capital city and Haiphong - the biggest harbor city. I recruited 16 grandmothers and grandfathers, each of whom lives with and takes care of their grandchildren. The data consisted of interview transcripts, field notes from observations, a variety of records and memoranda. Three processes were blended throughout the study: collection, coding, and analysis of data. To achieve diversity, the study also emphasizes

respondents' personal characteristics: age, socioeconomic background, religion, and marital status.

The Interview Process

First, I contacted grandparent-headed households in the capital city and Haiphong city. Being custodial grandparents, my mother and father have taken over full responsibility for bringing up my niece since she was two years old. Therefore, they helped me connect to their friends in Haiphong city who are also raising grandchildren. In Hanoi, a professor who was my advisor when I was in college in Vietnam, introduced me to a group of older adults, among whom were several caregivers to grandchildren. All the interviews took place in the participants' homes. Before interviewing, I determined who is keeping track of children's schooling in that household, grandfather or grandmother. Each interview began with a request for demographic information such as age and number of grandchildren, and ended with the information of socioeconomic status.

The interviews were conducted, taped, transcribed, coded, and filed in Vietnamese. Translation into English was carried out for the writing of the report and for presenting verbatim quotations. Care was taken to ensure that the translation of Vietnamese language into English was as accurate as possible.

Measurements

Academic Performance: In this research, I measured academic performance through students' reporting of past semester GPAs. Academic performance is the summative grades a student has achieved after their short or long term of education. The grades that students receive in classes are all averaged together to arrive at one cumulative grade, which is then converted into the GPA (Masrom & Usat, 2015). GPA in Vietnamese schools is determined in numeric scale. The highest grade is 10.00 points. Students achieving over 8.00 points of average are evaluated at good standing; from 6.00 to under 8.00 is fair standing, and under 6.00 is poor.

The current research is qualitative in nature. I did not attempt to measure and correlate variables in the traditional quantitative sense. Rather, the respondents' own words became the data for this project. The interviews were analyzed in an attempt to document emergent patterns in respondents' answers. Hopefully, these patterns will allow us a deeper understanding of grandparents' influences on their grandchildren's academic performance.

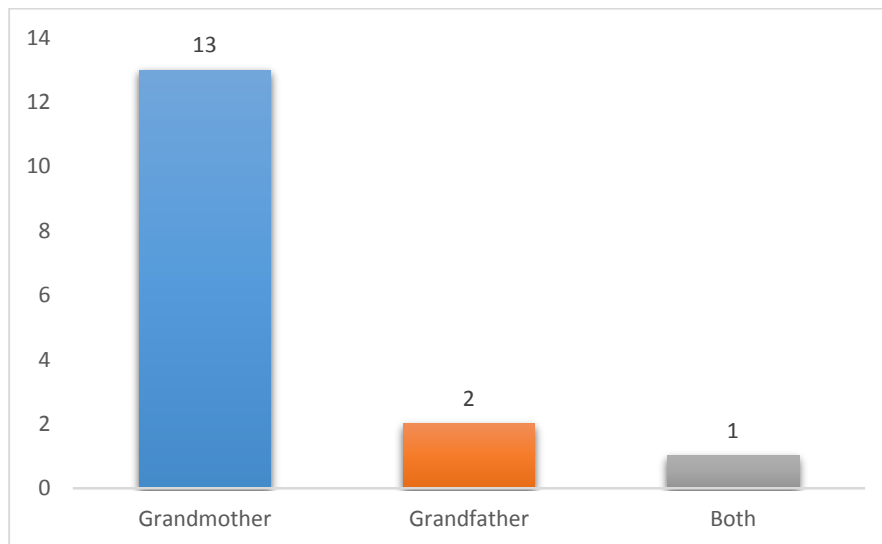
CHAPTER VI

RESULTS

Family Background and Patterns of Grandchildren's Academic Performing

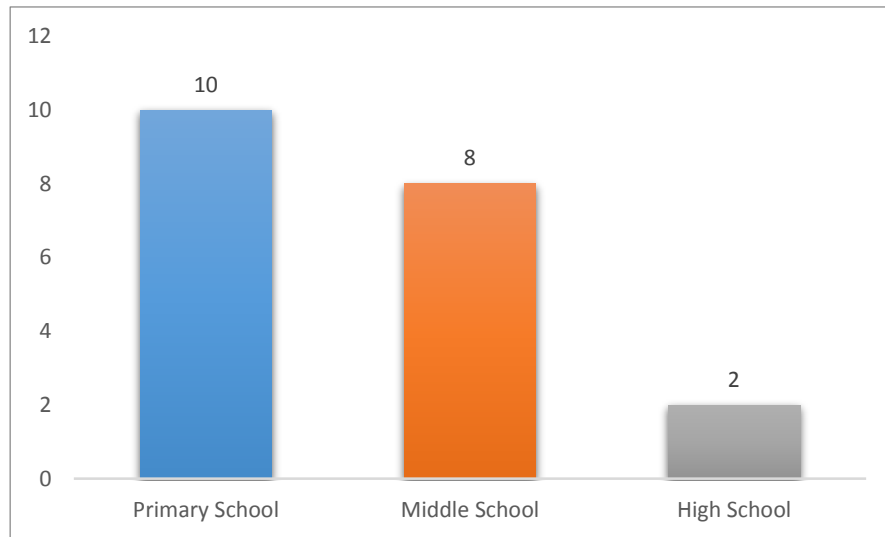
In this investigation, I conducted sixteen in-depth interviews. There are eleven one on one interviews and five mixed ones (with two respondents in one). In thirteen out of sixteen grandparent-headed households, grandmothers are primarily in charge of their custodial grandchildren's education, and in two of the remaining grandfamilies, grandfathers held this position. Only one family had both grandmother and grandfather jointly in charge.

Figure 1: Who is primarily in charge of their custodial grandchildren's education



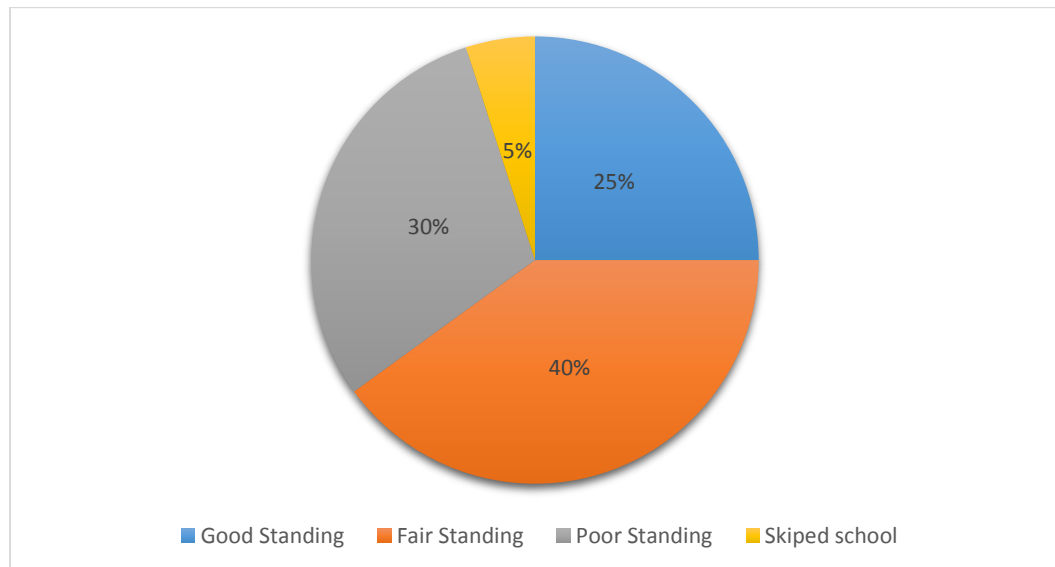
There are two direct reasons why they claimed to have led to grandmothers being the main care-giver. First, the husband had passed away or had been in poor health condition. Second, the husband was busy working or figuring out a source of income.

Figure 2: Grandchildren's level of education



According to the grandparents' report, out of twenty school-age grandchildren, ten are in primary school, 8 are in middle school, and 2 are in high school.

Figure 3: Grandchildren's Academic Performance



Among 16 grandfamilies in this investigation, there are 20 school-age grandchildren raised by grandparents, including five good-standing students, eight fair-

standing, six poor-standing, and one skipped school. Most of them reported educational outcomes remaining a constant over time. Two of them made considerable progress throughout the years, going from fair standing to good standing. The progress is reflected by the grandparents and the teachers, though no specific figure was given.

“His teacher also compliments on him. I think he will be in good standing this semester. He seems to have done a good job,” (Chuyên, 74)

“Good standing. But In 2nd grade, he was just in fair standing” (Ngọc, 57)

Nevertheless, three of the grandchildren’s academic performance dropped, and one of them ended up quitting school. Overall, for these students, any transition phase requires special attention. All of the three grandchildren mentioned are in the first grade of their levels. Several direct factors are reported as the causes of the declining trend in their school performance such as video games and unfamiliar educational environment.

“He was always in good standing in primary school. But since he went to the middle school, I think because of the new environment and ... he became addicted the video game. He has done worse.” (Dung, 60)

A grandmother also claimed that her grandchildren’s schooling was negatively affected due to their situation (the loss of their parents, or the absence of parents in their lives).

“Their mental health must be negatively affected. They used to be panic... They became introspective.... Recently, Son (the grandson) has not been performing as well as before at school, you know... since he turned teenage.” (Như, 67)

However, it was reported that his mom passed away when he was in the middle school. He was still in good standing then, and even passed the entrance exam to a top high school. A question arises here as to the actual cause of his declining educational outcomes.

Homeroom teacher-blaming was used to explain why a grandchild quit school

“Although we had several meetings with his homeroom teacher and talk about his situation, he was suspended from school for a few weeks as a punishment. We felt unfair and angry with her decision. We felt like his homeroom teachers did not care about him. We told her that we wouldn’t let him go to school (a challenging voice). So, he dropped out.... This happened starting the spring semester of the 6th grade when they changed the homeroom for Phong’s class. Her punishment was severe. She asked Phong to stand up and sit down 200 times. He was so stressed and scared” – a grandmother explained why her grandson decided to drop out of school.” (Thom, 67)

Family background

Based on the interview data and the official documents provided by the People's Committee of Wards in Ha Noi and Hai Phong city, 80% of grandparent-headed household are offered grants because of their grandchildren’s situation. The flat rate is 400,000 VND per month for each child (17.6 USD). Moreover, all grandparents who took part in the in-depth interviews complained about their financial condition. All of the grandfamilies have faced various difficulties in their lives despite social class and occupation, particularly the challenges of parental role toward their grandchildren. Based on the information acquired from the in-depth interviews and observations, these grandfamilies could be categorized into two groups: working class and middle class. There were not any upper-class families.

Table 1: Classification of social and occupational status

Social class	Previous occupation	Current occupation
<i>Working class</i>	Worker Street Vendor/Food Stall Owner/Food Cart Owner	Housekeeper Small business House wife Retirement
<i>Middle class</i>	Governmental worker/ officer/ associate Businessman (have their own business)	Maintain the business Freelancer Retirement

Moreover, most grandparents and their spouses keep working or seek other jobs after retirement age. In Vietnam, previous generations perceived a different concept of “retirement.” For them, “retirement” means the withdrawal from a “governmental position” or occupation and having a retirement pension. Most grandparents often get freelance jobs, earning more money for family support. Thirteen out of 16 grandmothers are still working. Interestingly, there are two common jobs the working grandmothers in my sample, food stall owner/food cart owner (6 out of 16); and “Ô sin” (refers to maid/housekeeper) (5 out of 16). Especially in two-grandparent families, there is at least one person working to maintain household income.

How can family background affect the way grandparent engage in their children educational progress?

The concept of family background includes socioeconomic status as well as the social, educational, and cultural resources. According to sociocultural theory, grandparents with many social and cultural resources are more likely to help their

children with schooling and learning. They inspire the desire to learn and teach their children the importance of higher education. Moreover, previous research has demonstrated that the higher Socioeconomic Status ¹ (SES) level the grandparents are, the more likely they are to inspire and motivate their grandchildren in studying, especially grandparents who have a good educational background themselves (Mollegaard & Jæger, 2015).

There are two households with higher and more stable income and the children from both families are found to have good-standing performance at school. The grandparents claimed that they frequently checked on their grandchildren to keep track of their studying and school work.

“Good standing. Hoang also has good ability to acquire knowledge... He got highest grades in Math and English.” (Ngọc, 57)

“His homeroom teachers said that he was one of the top students in the class. He is active and has participated in many competitions.” (Hoàn, 61)

They also sent their grandchildren to extracurricular classes and a variety of athletic or artistic activities, which not only encouraged children’s creativity but also helped them to explore their potentials. These families focused on exploring the strengths, weaknesses, and the needs of their grandchildren. More important, they could afford to do so.

“He loves dancing and playing basketball. When he watches television, or listens to a fun melody, he will immediately move his body. I also want to send him to a dancing club. But not now. He has already had piano lessons and has been playing basketball twice a week. I don’t want to make him overwhelmed, but it’s better for him to spend time on sport or do some hobbies rather than playing video games on.” (Ngọc, 57)

¹ Socioeconomic Status (SES) is one of the most significant factor as investigating how grandparents involve in their custodial grandchildren’s education. Socioeconomic status is the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation (APA’s definition).

*“He plays badminton with his friends. He asked me to teach him how to play ping-pong and now he’s fluent. I used to be a professional in ping-pong. Now I’m getting older so I no longer play as much. I used to join city-wide competition. *laugh* I bought him a pair of badminton rackets, a hundred grand! Now he plays every day after school before he gets home and has dinner.” (Hoàn, 61)*

However, current research has not demonstrated that SES significantly affects how grandparent engage in their children educational progress. Some grandchildren from both social classes were found to have good academic performance at school. There were three grandchildren in working-class families who had shown high academic achievements despite their households’ low income. It was reported that their grandparents earn from 3,000,000 to 5,000,000 VND, which is approximately from 132.10 to 220.20 USD monthly. Notably, one of them received academic awards.

“The kids have been very respectful, kind and dutiful. Huong, the girl, has been doing very well at school. When she was in first grade, she won first place in a city-wide handwriting contest. In her tenth grade, she was one of the exceptional students of her school. The boy, Son, joined many different contests at school, too. He won Math and English contests school-wide and city-wide. They both are hardworking and possess good characteristics. They understand their unfortunate situation and are self-motivated. Son is now in twelfth grade at Ngo Quyen High School (one of the top 4 public schools with high quality in the city). Huong just took the high school entrance exam and got accepted at Ngo Quyen High School, too.” (Nhự, 67)

“He will be in good standing this semester. He seems to have done a good job. His teacher always compliments on him.” (Chuyên, 74)

Nonetheless, taking a closer look at the data, we observe that an unstable financial background can be a barrier to their perception of the real values education can offer. Some grandparents claimed they could not send their grandchildren to the extracurricular classes due to their financial situation. Moreover, the poorer families put emphasis more on the need to get a stable job or a steady source of income, than on pursuing education.

Constrained by financial difficulties, they consider this route to be a safer choice, although they might see their grandchildren's ability and potentials to pursue and succeed on the educational path.

“Now, the fact is that the unemployment rate has increased. Graduating from college doesn't mean a potential opportunity to get a job... You know, hobbies or passion could not get them a good job. He has to look into the reality. I don't want him to waste their time. And, the back-up plan is the apprenticeship. And then he could get a job and not wasting time. Honestly, we couldn't afford him 4 years-college. Huong (the younger sister) told me that she probably would not go to college.” (Nhu, 67)

*“- Not sure. But I hope she can pass the entrance exam and go to the public high school (high quality and low tuition fee). After high school, I hope she can get a job to support me.
- What if she desires to go to college or she is capable of getting higher education?
- Impossible. I cannot afford. I am getting older, suffering from disease. However, I still working. Just hope she become mature and support me.” (Nhan, 62)*

Grandparents' Engagement in Grandchildren's Academic Performance

Parent involvement is a key component of childhood education programs (Nokali, Bachman & Votruba-Drzal, 2010). Like parents, grandparent involvement typically includes behaviors at home and school to support their children's educational progress, as well as their communication with teachers. Grandparent involvement is also affected by their values and attitudes regarding education and the aspirations they hold for their children. Although values and attitudes may not directly influence academic outcomes, they may leave a positive effect on children's academic achievement by promoting children's motivation and persistence in challenging educational tasks.

There is a common pattern in my data that grandparents can teach their grandchildren basic knowledge such as the alphabet or instruct some basic calculations at

preschool age or the first grade. However, the higher grandchildren's education level is, the more grandparents have to struggle helping them study at home. Many grandparents may not be familiar with the reformed educational programs that have taken place or with the terminology used. The grandparents' lack of education could be a barrier when dealing with children's homework. Moreover, the language of learning and teaching at school may be challenging to some grandparents

"... when he goes to the higher grade, I am unable. Honestly, I just remind him to do homework and encourage him. I just finished the 8th grade- 8 out 10 (the previous education program). I have no idea with the reformed education program." (Chuyên, 74)

"I always remind her to study and do homework. But I can't help her with homework. I am stuck. It has been a long time. Even she is learning the reformed program." (Tuyêt, 65)

"I couldn't help him. I have no idea about the current educational program." (Lan, 74)

"I used to help when he was in the 1st grade. But now I cannot. I quit high school." (Thoan, 67)

There are several alternatives by which grandparents can engage in their children schoolwork:

(1) Verbal communication: Grandparents often talk with children when they go back home from school and ask them about school. Additionally, they often remind their grandchildren to do homework or check on school work. Through the conversations, grandparents can encourage and motivate them:

"I often do but I am incapable to help them with their homework or tutor them at home. Just check on them and earnestly motivate them in their studying.... Instructing children, we must be gentle and patient." (Chuyên, 74)

"I got home late but still checked Vy's contact note and her homework. Sometimes, we stayed up until 11pm to finish the homework...However, somedays, the homeroom teacher still texted me that Vy did not do the assignments or had not finished yet. She is not lazy. She is hard working,

but she can't do the assignments because she doesn't understand. I couldn't help her all nights, so I quit my job and focus on taking care of two kids" (Dung B.,59)

(2) Building their relationship with homeroom teachers: grandparents can communicate with homeroom teachers, or attend parent- teacher meetings to be informed of their grandchildren's academic results. This is also one of the most significant factors affecting grandchildren's school performance. I will specifically discuss about this factor in a separated section: *"The relationship with homeroom teachers and their involvement in their schooling."*

"Sometimes. After school, I stop by his classroom and talk with her. She complimented him because he caught up quickly and got good standing after doing not well in the 2nd grade." (Ngọc, 57)

"She calls me quite often to let me know what's going on in class. Sometimes she really cares about him. We have a really good relationship. She keeps me up to date with everything that's happening with him and even call to just check on me. The teachers love and care about Khánh." (Chuyên, 74)

(3) Sending them to extracurricular classes or hiring tutors: Grandparents who send their children to extracurricular classes expect that they can learn more than they can from just going to school. They believe that these extracurricular classes can help their grandchildren get good grades at school and have a better preparation for the important examination.

"Since he started going to the 1st grade, I sent him to English class He also has a tutor for Math, Literature. His grandpa takes him to the tutor's house 3 times/ week."

"Quang Anh is taking part in an English class." (Như, 67)

(4) Reward & punishment: Grandparents claimed that they bought their grandchildren new clothes, toys, or took them to parks when grandchildren got good grades. Due to

financial conditions, the rewards are not frequent. Instead, they are more likely to praise their grandchildren.

“If he gets 9, 10 points, we compliment him. We will buy him the toys he like or let him play iPad games in a longer time. Probably, his mom would pick him up in the weekend and take him to somewhere to eat and play.”
(Hoàn, 61)

“Yes. I also encourage and compliment him. We are not rich but I can buy him something he likes. His mom was gone. Therefore, I am like his mom. I need to be with him and encourage him.” (Dung V., 60)

On the other hand, most of them said that their grandchildren are strictly disciplined. They would punish them when their grandchildren break the rules, have any mischievous behaviors, or are reported to get low grades at school.

“We are very strict.” (Thom, 67)
“Vinh is strict disciplined” (Cung, 71)
“... if he does something wrong, we will punish him, not allowing him to go out or eat.” (Hoàn, 61)
“Spanking, punishing him to not go out if teachers complain about him”
(Ngọc, 57)

Also, grandparents claimed that they rarely spanked their grandchildren. They said that they did not want to hurt and stress them out because their grandchildren might experience the emotional problems once they lost their parents.

“Q: Have you ever spanked him?”
A: Yes. If he is not dutiful or he argues over us. But it rarely happens”
(Thoan, 71)

“Only once I spanked her, her teacher called me and said that Hoài Anh had not done homework. And I scolded her for that. I also told her that she made me upset and disappointed. She is not as fortunate as her peer. I do not want to push her” (Nhân, 62)

Grandparents' age

In my data, grandparents' old age is one the barrier to them engaging in their children's education. Of the 16 participants, two are in their fifties, eight are in their sixties and six are more than eighty. Three over-seventy- year old grandparents were less likely to engage in and keep track of their custodial grandchildren's academic performance. When being asked how their grandchildren were doing at school, they even provide incorrect information due to their confusion. One of them needed their relative to correct their answer during the interview.

*“Q: What standing did he get in last 2 years?
A: Fair. Normal. Oh. Good standing.” (Binh, 72)*

*“- Is he doing well at school?
-Yes. He always gets 8, 9 and 10 at school.
- So, he has good standing at school, isn't he?
(Grandma's relative): No. Just fair standing. Not good yet.” (Lan, 74)*

Age related health degradation has limited their ability to take care of children. Most of them complained about old-age diseases as one obstacle to being able to frequently check on their grandchildren's studying. In an interview, a relative of the grandmother involved and claimed that:

“We sometimes check on him and assist him do homework. Even we instruct him do housework to support grandmother. He is not excited. And not hard working. Grandmother suffers from heart attack and old-age disease. She's just discharged from the hospital. Grandmother living with 2 grandchildren. He is the older brother. He has to help and support her.” (Tien, 32)

“I can't check on him frequently, I am getting older. Many disease, you know?” (Lan, 74)

By contrast, younger grandparents (around fifty years old) are often more involved in their children's academic performance. They also even provided their

grandchildren external learning resources that helped promote their grandchildren's educational progress. These grandparents also had positive perspectives on education and upgraded knowledge and knew how to develop as much as possible their grandchildren's academic ability.

*“Since he started going to the 1st grade, I sent him to English class. My son got IELTS * 7.0. He got good standing at school. But he is in Ha Noi almost time so he could not tutor Hoang. Just check on Hoang when he gets back. If he lived in Hai Phong, I hadn't sent Hoang to English class. He also has a tutor for Math, Literature. His grandpa takes him to the tutor's house 3 times/ week.” (Ngoc, 57)*

“English is essential, now. Therefore, I hire a English tutor.... Education is the only way to have a bright future.” (Dung, V., 59)

Grandparents' perspectives on children's education

Grandparents' perspectives are important in shaping grandchildren's valuing of education. Values, as a resource, are transferred from grandparents to their grandchildren through communication. Positive values can considerably contribute to higher academic achievements. On the contrary, children's school attainment may be discouraged if grandparents do not promote such values.

In the current study, grandparents who were raising their grandchildren had different perspectives on the children's education, regardless social status. When the participants were asked about their plans for their grandchildren, all of them showed uncertainty about the future: *“I do not expect much. What should I plan.”* (Nhự, 67). The old age is one of major reason of their uncertainty: *“We are getting older. We don't know when we leave them. Just play it by ear.”* (Cung, 71)

As discussed earlier, the extracurricular classes, *“học thêm,”* have been become popular. However, grandparents have seen them as indispensable: *“Not attending Math,*

English class means the students would be behind at school” (Tim, 58). Even some of them who could not afford the tuition fee for extracurricular classes due to financial conditions, believed that not attending extracurricular classes was a reason for their children’s bad performance at school: “We can’t afford the fee of extracurricular classes, so he does not have the best condition to study.” (Cung, 71)

In addition, an unstable financial background can be a barrier to grandparents’ perception of the real values education can offer. Some grandparents claimed that they put emphasis more on the need to get a stable job or a steady source of income, because to them, it is a safer choice, although they might see their grandchildren’s ability and potentials to pursue the educational carrier. First, they cannot afford the tuition fee for higher education. They believed that college is so much expensive. Moreover, they tend to be negative about higher education and “college.”

“College couldn’t help my kids out the poverty. Earning the bachelor doesn’t mean getting a job. Many college graduates are unemployed.” (Nhự, 67)

“I hope she can get a job to support me... Impossible. I cannot afford college. I am getting older, suffering from disease. However, I am still working. Just hope she become mature and support me.... College cost much money and time.” (Nhân, 62)

These values and perceptions might be transmitted to grandchildren through communication that limits the grandchildren’s educational progress. These grandchildren were also reported to have poor and fair-standing performance.

On the other hand, 10 out of 16 respondents thought highly of the role of education. They believed education can create a profound change in their grandchildren lives. They constantly talked about the importance of education.

“Education is the only way to success.” (Ngọc, 57)

“If there are any extracurricular classes, please let me know. I will register for her to join in. I’ll pay tuition fee when I get the salary. I saw that she is fine at English so I tried my best to send her to an English class. I told her that “If you are capable. I’ll try my best. I could not be beside you forever, one day I’ll leave you so I want to give you a “fishing rod” (education), so you can get a job to take care of yourself in the future.” (Tim, 58)

“I told her that anything she wants to learn, any school she wants to go, I will try to afford. She can ask her teachers friends to learn more about high schools and which one is suitable for her. In the contemporary life, the higher educational level you get, the higher status you are at. And then there is a greater likelihood to meet good and well-educated friends. Therefore, I always encourage her to try her best.” (Tuyết, 65)

This group of grandparents was more likely to engage them in grandchildren’s school work, encouraging and motivating them. The children from this group were more likely to succeed academically.

“Fortunately, they completely understand their situation. Therefore, they always try to do better at school. They have good standing performance.” (Ngọc, 57)

“Last year, she won the 3rd place in district-wide math competition. She is also at the top of excellent students.” (Tuyết, 65)

The Relationship with Homeroom Teachers and Their Involvement in Children’s Schooling

Homeroom teachers play a key role in the family-school bridge. All grandparents in my sample claimed that they often contacted their grandchildren’s homeroom teachers. Frequent communication with homeroom teachers helps grandparents to keep track of their grandchildren’s schooling. On the other hand, schools also inquire about their students’ situations at home. The more parents and teachers share relevant information with each other about a student, the better equipped they will be to help that student

achieve academic success. Measures of grandparent involvement commonly include the quality and frequency of communication/contact with teachers. Parent-teacher meetings are the most common kind of contact between grandparents and homeroom teachers. All respondents reported that they frequently attended this meeting.

“We often attend the meetings.” (Thom, 67)

“Absolutely. I and my husband always come when we are invited.”
(Tuyết)

Nonetheless, communication is a broad term. Considering the quality of the communication as well as the extent to which it is utilized is immensely important. Grandparents are less likely to have long conversations in this meeting and often acquire little information from the homeroom teacher regarding their grandchild’s school performance. The grade report is provided every semester as a summary of the educational process.

*“Q: What did the teacher say in the most recent meeting?
A: Nothing. He was doing well.”* (Hoàn, 61)

*“Q: What did the teacher say?
A: Not much. She only complimented Hoài Anh on her attitudes and manners. She said that Hoài Anh was a good girl, nice and polite.”* (Nhân, 62)

“Her teacher did not say much. Sometimes she chatted and talk in class. She was doing fine. But not good standing.” (Tìm, 58)

On the other hand, grandparents can easily contact teachers. When asked how often they contacted homeroom teachers, all of my respondents stated that it was quite frequently. However, some said that teachers only contact them in case of important notifications such as: “tuition fee deadline,” their grandchildren having a problem in school, or an “urgent matter.” Coincidentally, these grandparents are less likely to engage

in their grandchildren's studying, which was reflected in the fact that they were barely aware of their grandchildren's academic progress or that they avoided being specific in their answers.

“Q: Do you often contact to his homeroom teacher? How's about your relationship?”

A: Regarding paying tuition fee, she often contacts me. We also attend all of the parent-teacher meetings.” (Phòng, 61)

“Q: How is he doing at school?”

A: Fine.

Q: What standing did he get in last 2 years?”

*A: Fair. Normal. Oh. Good. Good standing” *so confused* (Binh, 72)*

“Not often, she contacts us if there is any problem, for example: he did something wrong or did not do homework, or check us on etc. You know boys are always active and maybe obstreperous.” (Cung, 71)

As predicted, the more frequently grandparents communicated with homeroom teachers, the more engaged they are in their children's education.

“She calls me quite often to let me know what's going on in class. Sometimes she calls to compliment him. We have a good relationship. She keeps me up to date with everything that's happening with him and even call to just check on me. The teachers love and care about Khánh.... I think he will be achieve good standing this semester.... His teacher compliments for his progress.” (Chuyên, 74)

“Fortunately, their teacher always cares about them and devoted to spend time with them like parents. Until now, I am grateful to Mrs. Doan Huong- Son's homeroom teacher in Ngo Quyen middle school. He has become like today thanks to her. She was very strict and drove him to the right way. He was strict disciplined at school but still be loved and cared by her. In general, we and their teacher often contact each other and have a close relationship. Therefore, they have been doing well at school.” (Như, 67)

Grandfamilies are among the cases that receive particular attention from the school board and the staff. As teachers understand the situation, they can encourage and motivate

children to focus on their education progress. There are several ways teachers can support these cases:

- (1) Fundraising for the students from low-income grandfamilies:

“They care about them. From the principal to the teacher. Sometimes, they call other teachers to donate and support us.” (Phòng, 61)

- (2) Inform the school board and propose financial support such as tuition discount:

“Bách (The older kid) is doing well at school. He gets good standing every year. However, in the 6th grade, we did not get any financial support, pensions. When he turned to the 7th and 8th grade. His homeroom teacher has supported him the health insurance. And his tuition fee is totally supported by the parent association’s fund. But we still pay for school supplies and textbooks. Quang Anh goes to Nguyen Tri Phuong school. I and his principal have known each other for a long time. Therefore, she also supports him in everything: textbook, uniforms, and tuition fee.” (Thoan, 71)

- (3) Offering extracurricular classes for a minimal fee or for free to the students raised by grandparents:

“Q: Yes. Quang Anh is taking part in an English class.

A: Who pays for that?

Q: That’s for free. The class is run by a teacher in his school. She knew our situation, so we got it free.

A: Bach has Math and English class as well. We just have to pay a half.”

(Thoan, 71)

In addition, teachers helping grandfamilies after school strengthens the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. The grandchildren whose grandparents have a close relationship or frequent contacts with teachers are more likely to succeed in their educational pursuits. They are reported to be stable in their education progress or even achieve academic successes.

Otherwise, a negative relationship between grandparents and homeroom teachers is one reason for children dropping out:

“Let me tell you one thing. He is supposed to be in the 8th grade this year. But he dropped out of school after the 6th grade. When he went to secondary school, his studying was getting worse. I do not know why. His homeroom teacher complaint about his study. She said he incapable to study and did not understand anything- not at all. His performance was really bad. He talked with others in class. Although we and his homeroom teacher also had several meetings and talks about his situation, he was suspended from school within few weeks as a punishment. We felt unfair and angry with her decision. We feel like his homeroom teachers did not care about him. We told her that we wouldn’t let him go to school (a challenging voice). So, he quitte.... You know, if Mr. Nguyen used to be his homeroom teacher, everything had been alright and he had not been like this. Mr. Nguyen said that Phong had a good ability to acquire knowledge, but he was distracted. But since the spring semester of the 6th grade, they changed the homeroom for Phong’s class. She has a severe punishment. She punished Phong to “stand up and sit down” 200 times. He was so stressed and scared.” (Thom, 67)

Hence, there was not any connection between the teacher and the grandparent. In fact, the relationship was potentially conflictual. The grandparent even used her grandchild’s dropping out of school as a way to challenge the teacher. Unsurprisingly, this grandfamily is reported to have the least frequent communication with teachers.

The Role of Kinship in Vietnamese Grandfamilies

Kinship has become an additional resource outside the family of origin. The families in a strong and close-knit kinship network are more likely to benefit from their own kinship. Largely, those resources are linked to financial and spiritual support. Therefore, an important question is: *“What role does the kinship network play for custodial grandparents raising their grandchildren and engaging them in their studying and academic performance?”*

My results indicate that the kinship network plays a significant role in custodial grandparents’ engagement in children’s studying and academic performance. The closer

the kinship a family has, the more likely they are to benefit from these relationships. Grandparents can get kinship support in numerous ways. The most common way is for them to receive money each month or each year, or even just occasionally, to ease their financial burden and stress. With a stable financial situation, grandparents can pay attention to educating and nurturing their grandchildren. Additionally, there is a greater likelihood that they can afford extracurricular classes for their grandchildren.

“Their uncles often send them clothes, or money to support their tuition fee” (Cung, 71)

“My niece is running her business. She tries to support us and hire my husband to work for her. He seems more relax disengaged with that position than the previous job, but still high-paid.” (Dung B., 59)

“His sister has a big business, so she gives us 2,000,000 VND/ month. She is my husband’s biological sister. Her house is not far from ours. Her family is richest in our family line. Her daughter studies so well. I heard she is studying master program in Hanoi National University. Her family make us proud. I wish we could be like that.” (Dung V., 60)

Beside financial support, relatives, particularly the child’s aunt, uncle (grandparents’ other children) can provide before and after-school care, including drop-off or pick-up from school, or by providing back-up child care when grandchildren are ill or other unusual circumstances occur.

“His cousin - my first daughter’s daughter helps me to pick him up at school. She usually checks on him. I can’t tutor him or teach him at home. Therefore, his cousin assists him to do homework every night, he is in his cousin’s house. He spends the whole weekends at home. His cousin’s son is in the same class with him, so it’s more convenient.” (Khánh, 67)

“We sometimes check on him and assist him do homework. Even we instruct him do housework to support grandmother. He is not excited. And not hard working. Grandmother suffers from heart attack and old-age disease. She’s just discharged from the hospital. Grandmother living with 2 grandchildren. He is the older brother. He has to help and support her.” (Tiến, 32)

Another significant form of support that the kinship network provides is tutoring grandchildren. These relatives can help children with homework when they are at home. Additionally, the relatives who have been performing well at school can become tutors to the grandchildren. Children can absorb academic knowledge and a desire to learn from these relatives. Thanks to these relatives, grandchildren now have the opportunity to study beyond what their current resources allow. There is a greater likelihood that they will be motivated to do better at school. Moreover, this form of support also creates a positive effect on grandparents' perspective on education.

“My youngest son often comes back home once/week. He helps Hoàng with the homework and check on him. He told me that Hoang has good ability to acquire knowledge but he is lazy... He also teaches Hoàng at home.” (Ngọc, 57)

“Every night, he is in his cousin's house, she tutors him home.” (Chuyên, 74)

Positive Role Models for Grandchildren

A role model is a person who serves as an example by influencing others. For many children, the most significant role models are their parents and caregivers. The positive role models can engage children in positive and constructive actions. Children who have good, strong role models to follow have a better chance of achieving academic success.

Parents are roles models for children

Parents serve as role models not only through direct interactions with their children, but also through the examples they set with their attitudes and behaviors within the family and in the outside world. By addressing their concerns, sharing their lives, and

maintaining a constructive perspective, parents can contribute to their children's personal growth and development. Moreover, parents can help their children effectively with their studying at home (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2007).

However, could parents be a powerful model for children even when they are not with them or are unable to take care of them?

Parents are likely to become models for children in their educational careers. In this type of family, grandparents play a key role in the connection between parents and children. Some respondents reported that they have frequent communication with children about their parents. They tend to tell their grandchildren good memories about their parents, and create a good impression of parents and a strong connection between parents and children. They are careful when talking about children's parents and avoid talking about anything negative. Grandparents not only want parents to be models for children, but also motivations for children in their lives, particularly their educational careers. The grandchildren in these families reported having good standing performance or fair standing, but improving.

"I said to him that his dad was working hard out there to pay his tuition and living cost, even he does not... His dad loves him so much, so "don't upset him." (Chuyên, 74)

"Her mom used to go to the top university. I am proud of her so much. I always encourage my grandson. And told him: "You can make me proud like your mom." (Tuyết, 65)

For Ngọc Ánh- a 13-year-old girl whose mother was arrested for drug trafficking she, surprisingly, was reported to have good performance at school and had received many awards and high academic achievement. When asked about her educational goals, she

said: “I am planning to go to Le Hong Phong high school² like my mom.” She also said that she was motivated to achieve more successes. Her grandmothers encouraged her to do better and have good preparation for the entrance examination of Le Hong Phong high school and even a top college in the future. Her mother’s deviance has been a lesson that made her grandparents become aware of what was going on around her.

The cousins - powerful roles models for children

In Vietnamese culture, cousins are very important, particularly as families become more spread out geographically. Cousins who are close to our social, professional and/or age level, we may respect and admire. They are likely to be at same age, share same norms and values. Cousin role models are perhaps more psychologically attractive to children in that their excellence seems more possible and easier to see as well as replicate. Since they are related, they are in some ways already very similar to each other, or within their zone of proximal development. Besides parents, cousins are powerful role models for children who they can reflect themselves. Therefore, adults in Vietnamese families, particularly grandparents, tend to cultivate and facilitate familial bonding between their grandchildren and cousins. In daily conversations with children, they frequently mention the cousins who have achieved academic success to transmit the importance of learning for their grandchildren.

“My husband’s sister has a big business. She is my husband’s biological sister. Her house is not far from ours. Her family is richest in our family line. Her daughter studies so well. I heard she is studying master program in Hanoi National University. Her family make us proud. I wish we could be like that.” (Dung, V, 58)

² Le Hong Phong high school is one of the highest- qualified high schools in Hai Phong city. The enrolment is competitive.

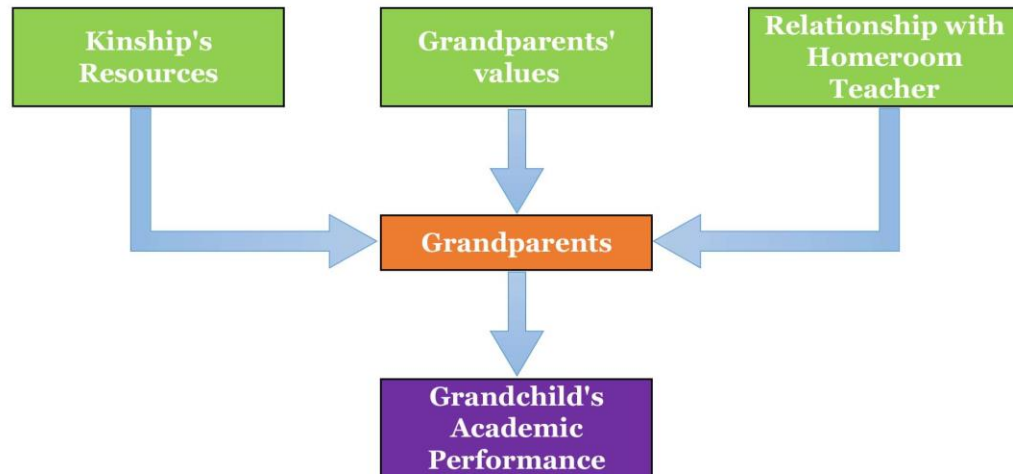
“If he is persistent going to college, he must be outstanding at college. Their cousins are good example. One of them went to Foreign Trade University. He has an excellent performance and now he gets a really high-paid job at a governmental agency. I told them if you are persistent going to college, just be like them, you must be outstanding. Their cousins all went to college, the top college and after graduation, they got good jobs.” (Ngọc, 57)

Within this familial bonding, children may be inspired to values learning from cousins. Four grandchildren whose cousins have academically succeeded were found to have significantly better performance at school than the one whose cousins have not. Furthermore, my data indicate that grandparents from this group are more likely to think that children’s education is important. In other words, these academically successful cousins also positively affect grandparents’ perspectives.

“She is an outstanding student at school. She is doing an amazing job. Another cousin - his aunt’s son is a junior in college- a top university in Ha Noi capital city. I often encourage him that” your cousins had successful achievements. Learn from them. If you do not try your best, you will always behind.” (Chuyên, 74)

Overall, the present study focused on the social capital network to analyze the process of how grandparents can influence grandchildren’s academic performance. We may conclude that grandparents act as agents of socialization that enable grandchildren to receive the resources needed for their education. Social capital is defined as “resources in terms of enforceable trust and reciprocity exchanges embedded in individuals’ social networks. Individuals can produce, maintain and use social capital through ties in that network to secure benefits for themselves” (Anh, Thomese & Saleminck, 2016, p.2).

Figure 4: Grandfamily's social capital network



Additional Variables

Besides the key components discussed above, I have found several additional factors that are also important. These variables minorly affect grandparents' engagement in their grandchildren's academic performance.

Geographic regions

I could not find a significant difference between urban and rural areas in terms of how grandparents engage in grandchildren's academic performance. However, grandchildren from rural areas were less likely to attend the extracurricular classes than the ones from urban areas. Some of their grandparents deemed going to extracurricular

classes unnecessary, while others simply cannot afford them. Moreover, different geographic areas place different emphases on various aspects of education. Rural areas consist of middle-to-low income neighborhoods; therefore, there are fewer extracurricular classes offered. Nevertheless, this is not a main factor influencing grandchildren's academic progress.

Parent's absence in children's lives

In the current study, there were several significant reasons why children's parents were unable to take care of them. The first obvious reason is that one or both of the children's parents passed away. The second one is that their parents are divorced and are unable to afford the children basic living expenses, or they chose not take care of them and left the children to grandparents. Also, some of children's parents worked far from home and could not physically take care of their children. They also could not provide much support for grandparents and children, even financial support.

According to the literature review, the loss of parents or their absence in children's lives is expected to negatively affect children's development, especially their educational process. They may have experienced traumatic loss. However, in my data, most of them claimed that the loss of parents just had an impact on children for a brief time. They explained that their grandchildren were too young when their parents passed away and everything seemed fine after that.

In the families where parents were absent in their children's daily lives due to other reasons, it was reported that children and their parents still have good relationships. They also have frequent conversations to check on each other. Besides, grandparents believed that since they had provided as much love and care to the grandchildren as the

parents could have, their grandchildren were still doing fine. The grandparents found the loss of the parents inconsequential.

There is the special case of a grandfamily with two grandchildren who were victims of domestic violence. Their mother was battered by husband/father, which negatively affected the children's mental and physical development. Their grandmother said that her granddaughter's studying and schooling had been interrupted due to psychological trauma.

Timeline

The timeline wherein grandchildren who are raised and live with their grandparents should be also considered. As reviewed earlier, time can build the relationship between grandparent and grandchildren. Especially in this type of household, this relationship significantly affects grandchildren's development, particularly their academic performance. This finding may be applied to the present research. All grandchildren have lived with their grandparents in the same household since their births or since they were very young. This might also explain why all of them reported having good relationships with their grandparents and not be negatively mentally affected when not being with their parents for such a long period.

Summary

To summarize, grandmothers are primarily in charge of their custodial grandchildren's studying and schooling in their family. There are two direct reasons: First, the husband had passed away or had been in poor health condition. Second, the husband was busy working or trying to find a source of income. The current research has

shown an association between family income and how grandparents engage in their children's educational progress. Instead of family background, my research has identified several key components of grandparents' involvement in their grandchildren's academic performance

To attain higher achievements in school, children in grandfamilies need grandparents' involvement. The involvement makes them feel more comfortable and motivated. Although all of the grandparents who participated in the interviews claimed that they frequently check on their grandchildren to keep track their study, several grandchildren's academic performance had declined and one ended up quitting school. Several factors were reported as the causes of the declining trend in their school performance, including video games, new environment, and homeroom teacher blaming. There are numerous ways that grandparents can engage in their children's schoolwork: (1) Verbal communication, (2) Building their relationship with homeroom teachers, (3) Sending them to extracurricular classes or hire tutors for them, and (4) Rewards and punishments.

My research has found that grandparents' advancing age is one barrier to them engaging in their children's education. In addition, age-related health conditions have limited their ability to take care of children. Most of them complained about old-age diseases as one obstacle to frequently checking on their grandchildren's studying. They have even enlisted their relatives in taking care of grandchildren. Grandparents who are raising their grandchildren have different perspectives on the children's education. In addition, an unstable financial situation can be a barrier to their perception of the real values education can offer. Kinship in Vietnamese grandfamilies is an additional resource

outside family of origin, one that is largely linked to financial and spiritual support. To motivate grandchildren to do better at school, grandparents often emphasize the role models of parents and cousins through daily communication with their grandchildren. The grandchildren in these families were found to have good standing performance or fair standing (but improving). Beside these key components, several additional factors were identified in the current research. Variables such as geographic region, parent's absence in children's lives, and time line minorly affect grandparents' engagement in their grandchildren's academic performance.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

When parenting is left to grandparents, they play the same role as the biological parents. Their involvement is important to children's development, especially the educational process. The review of literature demonstrated that the effect of grandparent's engagement in their custodial grandchildren's academic performance is significant. It is especially true in Vietnamese grandfamilies. Grandchildren can benefit from the social and cultural resources that grandparents transmit to their grandchildren (Bol, Kalmijn, 2015).

Using data from in-depth interviews with 16 participants who are raising their grandchildren, the current study provided insight into children's education in the grandparents-headed households in Vietnam. Like previous studies, it has also demonstrated that the more grandparents are involved in their grandchildren's educational process, the more likely their grandchildren are to achieve academic success. I have found that there is a strong relationship between grandparents' age, as well as their perspectives on education, and how they engage in children's academic performance. Age-related health conditions have also limited their ability to take care of children. Moreover, some Vietnamese older adults keep the traditional mindset, particularly in the way they educate their descendants, which may be no longer appropriate in contemporary education. The second factor is grandparents' perspectives on education. Their perspectives are very important in shaping how grandchildren value education. Values as a resource are transferred from grandparents to their grandchildren through communication. These values can promote children's academic achievement, but may

sometimes discourage children's school attainment. Other factors have insignificantly affected grandparents' involvement in children's education process including regions they are living, the loss of parents, and the time they have lived together.

Because of this study, we can see that in Vietnamese grandfamilies, grandparents are not a learning resource for their custodial grandchildren. There is a common pattern that grandparents can teach their grandchildren the basic knowledge such as the alphabet or instruct some basic calculations at preschool age or the first grade. However, the higher the grandchild's education level, the more struggles grandparents have when helping their grandchildren study at home. School systems have changed over the years. Many grandparents may not be familiar with the reformed educational programs that have taken place or with the terminology used. They may still view the educator as solely responsible for the academic development of learners. The grandparents' lack of education could be a barrier when dealing with children's homework. Moreover, the academic language of learning and teaching at school may be a challenge to some grandparents. However, they can provide external resources such as communication with homeroom teachers. Keeping in contact with homeroom teachers helps grandparents keep track of their grandchildren's schooling. The more parents and teachers share relevant information with each other about a student, the better equipped both will be to help that student achieve academically. Measures of grandparent involvement commonly include the quality and frequency of communication/contact with teachers as well as participation in children's working at home and school functions. Parent-teacher meetings are the most common kind of contact between grandparents and homeroom teachers. All respondents reported that they frequently attend this meeting.

Kinship is also a significant resource. It becomes an additional resource outside family of origin. Families in a strong and close-nit kinship network are more likely to benefit from their own kinship. Largely those resources are linked to financial and spiritual support. The kinship network plays a significant role in custodial grandparents' engagement in children's studying and academic performance. The closer the kinship a family has, the more likely they are to benefit from these relationships. Grandparents can get kinship's support in several ways. The common way is that they can send an amount of money each month or each year, or by occasion, to ease their financial burden and stress. With a stable financial status, grandparents will be able to pay attention to educating and nurturing their grandchildren. Additionally, there is a greater likelihood that they can afford extracurricular classes for their grandchildren. Second, relatives, particularly the child's aunt, uncle (their other children) can provide before- and after-school care, including drop-off or pick-up from school, or by providing back-up child care when grandchildren are ill or other unusual circumstances occur.

The findings from this study suggest several questions:

Why are grandmothers primarily in charge of their grandchildren's education?

First, in traditional Vietnamese culture, women are supposed to take on the responsibility for the housework and looking after children, even if they have their own career outside the home. The men/fathers are the traditional breadwinners and can dictate household education decisions, whereas women/mothers also play a key role in building a happy home life and keeping track of everything in the households. This custom still exists in contemporary Vietnamese life, particularly among the older generations. Moreover, maternal influence was the leading factor over the time in children's studying

and schooling (Roberts, 2010). When the parenting role is left to grandparents, they often raise their grandchildren in the same ways they did to their own children.

Why are there many academic performance drops when grandchildren are in the transition phase?

It has been demonstrated that the learning environment plays a significant role in determining students' academic achievement and learning. Research has found evidence for associations between the school environment and children's education outcomes (Coon, Carey, Fulker & Defries, 1993). The more positive and supportive the school environment, the greater motivation students have. In Vietnam, students often learn in advanced about the school to which they will go. Also, there are some extra classes that can prepare students for the program of the next educational level. Students who do not have good preparation in the transition phase, are more likely to struggle to adapt the new educational environment. Moreover, they may experience difficulties in maintaining their academic status. This may explain why there are many academic performance drops when grandchildren are in the transition phase. Hence, students may need teachers to be more involved and supportive.

Why does family background while not a primary factor, still play an important role in children's education?

The current research has shown a clear link between family background and grandparent engagement in their children's academic performances. Nonetheless, family income is a crucial factor in children's education. Does having more money in the

household produce better educational outcomes for children over time? Answering yes or no is hard. However, there is evidence that high income families often to have positive educational outcomes (Akee, Copeland, & Costello, 2010). Research has also shown that family background is associated with parenting, and low-income parents are more likely to exhibit poor parenting (Chevalier, Harmon, Sullivan, Walker, 2005). For Vietnamese grandfamilies, financial resources in households can provide children opportunities to attend the extracurricular classes believed to be important for Vietnamese children's educational careers. Nonetheless, taking a closer look at my data, we see that an unstable financial situation can be a barrier to the perception of the real values education can offer. Some grandparents claimed they could not send their grandchildren to extracurricular classes due to their financial situations. Moreover, the poorer families put emphasis more on the need to get a stable job or a steady source of income, instead of pursuing an educational career. Constrained by financial difficulties, they consider this route to be a safer choice, although they might see their grandchildren's ability and potentials to pursue and succeed on the educational path. In these families, dealing with financial problems is a priority. Moreover, we also saw that two grandchildren from higher and more stable income households had good-standing performance at school (middle class). The grandparents claimed that they frequently checked on their grandchildren to keep track of their studying and school work. They also sent their grandchildren to extracurricular classes. These grandchildren also took part in a variety of athletic or artistic activities, which not only encouraged children's creativity but also helped them to explore their potentials. These families focused on exploring the strengths, weaknesses, and the needs of their grandchildren and more important, they could afford to do so.

Therefore, increases in family income bring many more opportunities for a child to achieve academic success. Especially for custodial grandparents who face a range of challenges in their lives, stabilizing households is extremely difficult.

Why the kinship network is important for children's development, particularly their education?

Kinship networks are considered as social capital. Social capital is defined by the OECD³ as “networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups.” Fukuyama asserts that social capital “resides primarily in kinship networks” (2002, p.28). Putnam sees “the most fundamental form of social capital is the family” (1995, p.73). Additionally, Coleman contends that “...social capital in the family...play roles in the creation of human capital in the rising generation” (1988, p109). Bonding social capital is good for getting by and bridging social capital is crucial for getting ahead (Woolcock, 2001; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). Woolcock and Narayan used several examples to demonstrate the range of outcomes from bonding and bridging social capital. The potential benefits of social capital can be seen by looking at social bonds. Friends and families can help us in many ways - emotionally, socially, and economically. For instance, bonding social capital was beneficial in that it helped reduce risk and uncertainty as well as reinforce protection. Bridging social capital was important for the advancement of material interests or enhancing profits (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000).

³ OECD stands for The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

In the Vietnamese tradition, the kinship network plays a crucial role in family life. Kinship is form of relationship that Vietnamese people respect. The families in a kinship network are connected to each other through the annual ancestor worship and share some of the similar values. Traditional Vietnamese people retain much of their long-established customs and values. As social capital, kinship also provides support and benefits for the grandchildren and their families. In the current study, kinship significantly affected how grandparents engage in their grandchildren's academic performance. Kinship among Vietnamese grandfamilies has become an additional resource outside the family of origin. Largely those resources are linked to financial and spiritual support.

Furthermore, cousins are seen as powerful models for children. They play an important role, particularly as families become more spread out geographically. Cousins who are close to our social, professional and/or age level, we may respect and admire. They are likely to be at same age, share same norms and values. Cousin role models are perhaps more psychologically attractive to children in that their excellence seems more possible and easier to see and replicate. Since they are related, they are in some ways already very similar to each other, or within their zone of proximal development. Beside parents, cousins are powerful role models for children who they can reflect themselves. Therefore, adults in Vietnamese families, particularly grandparents, often cultivate and facilitate familial bonding between their grandchildren and cousins. Within this familial bonding, children can be inspired to value learning from cousins. Four grandchildren whose cousins have academically succeeded were found to have significantly better performance at school than the one whose cousins have not.

Why are parents more likely to become role models for grandchildren's education, instead of grandparents who are children's primary providers?

Some characteristics of Vietnamese culture can provide a good answer to this question. First, in multigenerational families, grandparents are most respected and have the highest authority. They are responsible for managing and adjusting family relationships, and they are the center of the family relation network. Even if children's parents are unable to be with them, grandparents still connect children with parents and construct an ideal image of parents in children's minds.

Second, the generation gap is usually an issue in the grandparent-grandchildren relationship. Although in the current study, many grandparents, and even grandchildren, claimed that they have a close and good relationship with each other, grandparents might be not role models for their grandchildren in terms of education. In addition, due to their educational level, academics is barely mentioned in their conversations with grandchildren.

Third, certain characteristics of older people is a primary reason keeping them from being role models, for example, old-age, diseases, and poor health conditions. Most of the older people are set in their ways, so they are less likely to change and learn new things. Also, my data show that grandparents did not often spend free time with their grandchildren or engage children in outdoor activities. Therefore, they may not have a good understanding of their grandchildren's needs.

The role of homeroom teachers and the importance of grandparent-teacher relation.

As discussed earlier, homeroom teachers play a key role in the family-school connection. Relationships between parents and teachers provide a foundation upon which

children develop the skills and behaviors that are critical for engagement in early elementary school. Some empirical research supports the position that parent-teacher contact relates to child academic achievement (Gabel, Graybill & Connors, 1977). There is a positive association between the grandparent-teacher relationship and children's educational attainment. The grandchildren whose grandparents had a close relationship or frequent contacts with teachers are more likely to pursue education attainment. Furthermore, the results have shown that homeroom teachers' support provided to the students the motivation in their educational progress. The literature also illustrated that teacher support was a positive predictor of students' interest and of social responsibility goal pursuit (Wentzel, 1998), which may motivate students to achieve academic success. Homeroom teachers also create a positive learning environment in class to promote competition among students.

Otherwise, negative relationships between grandparents and homeroom teachers is a reason for children dropping out of school. Why? The time students spend on studying and schooling is much greater than the time they spend at home. The homeroom teacher is the first person keeping track of students' schooling and may make immediate adjustment when any problem happens with their students. The close relationship with parents/grandparents encourage teachers' involvement in students' schooling which may promote grandparents' involvement in children's educational process. Children are more likely to get more support and learning resource

Theoretical Implication

Grandparents often have fulfilling relationships with their grandchildren, watching them learn and grow and being part of their lives, while others find that they are expected to do too much. The current study suggests that grandparents from these families are “substitute” parents and, hence, have a strong and independent influence on children's life chances. They may not be a primary learning resource for children. Nonetheless, they still can provide a greater resource once they are aware of the importance of education and provide grandchildren the external resources. My study also highlights the importance of transmitting cultural and social capital which children primarily absorb in family settings.

Sociocultural theory has maintained that custodial grandparents’ cultural and social resources, which they transmit to their grandchildren, significantly affects their educational progress. The role of grandparents in a family goes beyond promoting and enforcing norms, which lead to success in grandchildren’s education. Sociocultural theory explains the process of transmitting cultural and social capital in which grandchildren absorb not only grandparents’ values, but also external resources grandparents can engage them in. Grandchildren can be motivated and encouraged to do well in school or even taught and instructed by grandparents once they have come to positively value education. Through communication, the children in the family may internalize the importance of learning and schooling from the adults (grandparents). Also, a close tie between grandparents and children is a motivation for children to achieve academic success.

Methodological Limitations

Despite exploring a range of factors influencing how grandparents engage themselves in their custodial grandchildren's educational process, this study does not provide a complete picture due to several limitations. The biggest one is the sample itself. The sample may not be representative of the larger population (convenience sampling). Recruitment was based on the availability from relationships of my parents and my professors in Vietnam. I had little control over the sampling procedure. Participants came from the similar groups, so it is possible that they share the same traits and characteristics.

Second, bias could be a problem since the results are based solely on information provided by grandparents. The current study would have undoubtedly benefited from interviews with grandchildren, teachers, other family members, and more distant relatives.

Third, the language limitation should also be considered. The original interviews were conducted in Vietnamese. Transcribing the interviews and writing the report in English may not have completely captured the nuances of meaning in the original data. Finally, it is possible that my English skills might have somewhat limited what I have reported here.

Future Research

To date, grandparent-headed households are under studied in Vietnam. Therefore, the present qualitative study should be seen as laying the groundwork for future research. The results of the present study suggest that grandparents can bring

greater cultural resources to children once they are aware of the importance of education and engage themselves in providing additional social capital for children.

I would like to propose some topics for future research: (1) The role of homeroom teachers in the academic performance of students who are without parents; (2) The role of parents/caregivers in children's assimilation into a new educational environment; and (3) Kinship as children's social capital. Grandparents from these families are "substitute" parents and thus, have a strong and independent influence on children's life chances. They may not provide a primary learning resource for children, but they are central and connect the network of resources for their grandchildren's lives. Social capital theory is recommended as the theoretical framework for future research. Furthermore, diversity of ethnic-racial groups, in certain historical contexts, may also be a consideration for potential research on the grandparent-headed household, so that grandfamilies may get more attention not only in Vietnam or the United States but also in other countries.

Policy Implication

Since many grandparents who are primary caregivers, are still busy working for a source of income. They may experience a range of challenges such as: work and social stresses leading the family conflict. Therefore, one of the most emerging needs of custodial grandparent raising grandchildren is stable income and providing the better care for grandchildren. Governments can provide specific incentives and welfare for grandparent-headed household. Firstly, for the grandparents who are still working, we can offer flexible work schedules and better life conditions to individuals who are raising their grandchildren and have family care responsibilities. A family-leave policy should be

promoted. Relieving for caregivers may make them be more motivated and effective at work. This policy can provide benefits for the workplace by increasing worker productivity, for society by advancing equity for the working poor, and for the family by promoting the healthy development of all generations in the family. Additionally, for the retired grandparents, I would like to recommend a policy offering more pension benefits supporting their lives after retirement.

The Interview Guide

Date of Interview:

Background Information on Interviewee

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Religion:

Grandchildren's information:

Name:

Age:

Gender:

- *Would you tell me a little about your family and your relationship with your grandchild?*
- *What incident led to your decision of taking a fulltime care on your grandchild?*
- *How about your child? How was his/her feeling after that incident? Does it affect his/her daily life?*
- *Have you encountered any challenges after becoming his/her primary caregiver? If so, please tell me about them.*

Grandchild's parents

- Do his/her parents visit him/her?
- Do they have a good relationship?
- Do they still support the child's tuition and fees?

The parental role

- Could you please tell me about your grandchild?
- How long have you lived with her/him?
- When did you start taking over full responsibility for bringing up your grandchild?
- Do you think he/she behaves well? Why?
- Do you and your grandchild have a good relationship? Why?
- What are the challenges that you face as in the parental role?
- Do you ever feel overwhelmed? Why?
- Are there any events that affect your parental role?
- Do you often spend your free time to play with your grandchild? Why?

Grandparents' engagement in grandchildren's schooling

- Which school does your grandchild go to?
- Which grade is he/she in?
- Could you tell me the name of his/her homeroom teacher?
- Did you choose the school or class for your grandchild? Why? Do you think it is appropriate? Why?
- Do you often contact to your grandchild's teachers? (How close is this relationship?) Why?
- Do you often keep track of his/her schooling? Why?
- Are there any problems/struggles that he/she encounters at school?
- Do you know your grandchild's learning aptitude? Do you think there are some weaknesses in learning and schooling which your child needs to improve? If yes, how do you know?

- What do you see as your grandchild's greatest strengths or skills? How do you know?
When did you see your grandchild demonstrating these skills?
- Does he/she have any outstanding achievement at school?
- Which subject(s) is he/she good at? Which subject(s) do you think is his/her favorite?
- Which subject(s) is he/she not good at?
- Does your grandchild need a tutor?
- Do you help him/her with the subjects he/she is not good at? Why? Do you have any strategies so that he/she can improve? Does it work? Is it effective and make your child progress? Why?
- Do you think that the educational assistance being provided to your grandchild is effective? Why?
- How about your child's school work? How long does he/she do his/her homework? Are you with him/her to solve the homework problems?
- What do you think about his/her school's curriculum? Is it different from yours? Is it out of your knowledge?
- What was your experience like when you were at school?
- Which subjects can you instruct him/her?
- How many hours per day do you spend with your grandchild?
- Do you reward when he/she has a good school performance? Do you punish when he/she has a bad school performance? Why?
- What are your fears or concerns about your grandchild in his/her learning? Why?
- Can you describe your future goals and expectations for your grandchild and how do you think it is likely that he/she will meet them?

Grandchild's activities and relations at school

- What are his/her activities after class? Does he/she take part in any extracurricular activities? Why?
- Is he/she interested in any kind of sports or art? Do you allow him/her to participate in such activities? Why?
- Does he/she have good relationships with his/her peers and teachers?
- Does he/she have close friends at school? Do they help each other in learning and schooling?

Socioeconomic status

- What is your highest level of education?
- Have you retired?
 - ⇒ If “Yes”
- What was your job before retirement?
- Do you have a pension plan? How much do you receive per month?
 - ⇒ If “Not yet”.
- What is your current job?
- Could you tell me about your monthly income?
- Are you a part of any group or organization?
- Are you granted subsidy from any welfare/policy?

Health-related questions

- How often do you go to the hospital and complete a health examination?
- Do you have any health concerns?
- If yes, how does it affect you daily life?

Family information

- How many family members are there in your household?
- What is the total annual income of your family?
- Do you rent an apartment or own a house?
- How about your partner (Your wife/husband)? What is his/her occupation?
- Why are you fostering your grandchild (children)?
- Was your grandchild legally adopted?
- How many children have you fostered?

APPENDIX
Participants' information

Name	Gender	Age	Region	Occupation	Number of grand-children	Grandchildren Educational level	Reason for Grandfamily
Thoan	Female	71	Urban	- Retirement -Street Vendor	1	Primary School	Parent's death
Hoàn	Male	61	Rural	Freelance	1	Primary School	Parent's Divorce Father working far from home
Ngọc	Female	57	Urban	Businesswoman	2	Pre-school Primary School	Labor Export Parent's Divorce
Nhụ	Female	67	Urban	Housewife	2	High School	Parent's death
Thơm	Female	67		Housewife	1	Dropping out at Middle school	Parent's death
Tuyết	Female	65	Urban	Housewife	1	Middle School	Drug trafficking
Khánh	Female	67	Urban	Street Vendor	1	Primary School	Parent's death
Nhân	Female	63	Urban	Street Vendor	1	Middle School	Parent's Divorce
Cung	Male	71	Rural	-Veterans -Retirement	2	Middle School, Finished education	Parent's death
Lan	Female	71	Rural	Retirement	2	Primary School	Parent's death
Phòng	Female	61	Urban	-Food Cart Owner -Housekeeper	1	Middle School	Parent's death
Tim	Female	58	Urban	Housekeeper	2	Middle School	Parent's Divorce Domestic Violence

Dung B.	Female	59	Rural	Housekeeper	2	Pre-school +Primary School	Parent's Divorce
Dung V.	Female	60	Urban	Running small business	1	Middle School	Parent's Divorce
Chuyên	Female	74	Urban	Retirement	1	Primary School	Mother's death Father working far from home
Bình	Male	62	Rural	Retirement	1	Primary School	Parent's death Father

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