

Bridging Words and Futures: Parental Support in Developing Learners' Writing Proficiency in a Last Mile School

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ABSTRACT

Low writing proficiency is a concern in education. Using a qualitative descriptive research design, this study explored parental support in developing learners' writing proficiency. In-depth interviews were conducted with five purposively selected parents of learners in the last mile school. The data were analyzed through thematic analysis. It was found that parents support writing proficiency through direct teaching, patient communication, time management, encouraging independent learning, and vocabulary and spelling practice. Parental support also led to improved academic performance, stronger parent-child learning relationships, and personal growth among learners. Educational leaders and teachers may strengthen literacy programs and parent-school collaboration to improve learners' writing proficiency. Future research may use mediation analysis and develop a validated instrument through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).

Keywords: Bridging words and futures, parental support in developing learners' writing proficiency, last mile school

INTRODUCTION

Low writing proficiency in school institutions remains a significant concern in the global education landscape. Recent studies highlighted that many education systems continue to report varying levels of writing proficiency among learners, particularly in areas such as coherence, grammar, and organization of ideas (Graham, 2023). Similarly, global education reports emphasized that disparities in students' writing proficiency persist despite literacy initiatives and curriculum reforms, indicating that the issue remains prevalent worldwide (UNESCO, 2024).

In Oman, students demonstrated difficulties in essential writing components such as grammar, punctuation, and sentence construction, reflecting low levels of writing proficiency (Al-Saadi, 2023). Similarly, in Malaysia and Ethiopia, studies reported that many learners struggle to produce coherent and meaningful written texts, indicating persistent writing proficiency issues across different educational levels (Durga & Rao, 2023; Zewdie, 2024). In China, Zhou (2023) further revealed that students encounter challenges in academic writing, particularly in organizing ideas and applying appropriate writing conventions.

In the Philippine context, low writing proficiency continues to be documented in several studies. Research indicated that students demonstrate varying levels of writing competence, particularly in constructing organized and coherent written outputs (Fajardo et al., 2023). Additionally, recent findings highlighted that writing proficiency among learners differs across grade levels and school contexts, reflecting inconsistencies in writing performance (DepEd, 2023).

The presence of low writing proficiency in school institutions leads to significant consequences in the education system. It affects students' ability to effectively communicate ideas, limits their academic performance, and constrains their engagement in higher-order thinking tasks (Graham, 2023). Studies indicated that writing proficiency is closely associated with overall academic success and future educational opportunities (Zewdie, 2024). Furthermore, low writing proficiency can hinder students' preparedness for academic and professional demands reducing the overall quality of educational outcomes. At our school, low writing proficiency is

undeniably declining for the past three years. These consequences highlight the importance of addressing writing proficiency issues in school institutions; hence, this study was conducted.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it explores the strategies undertaken by parents in supporting learners' writing proficiency and identifies the gains obtained from parental involvement in last mile schools. The findings may help teachers, school leaders, and parents better understand the importance of parental support in enhancing learners' writing skills despite the challenges faced in remote and underserved communities. Moreover, the study may serve as a basis for developing programs and interventions that strengthen home-school collaboration and improve literacy outcomes among learners. On a broader scale, the study contributes to the promotion of inclusive and equitable quality education aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Sustainable Development Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

Research Questions

This study explored the role of parental support in developing the writing proficiency of learners in last mile schools. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

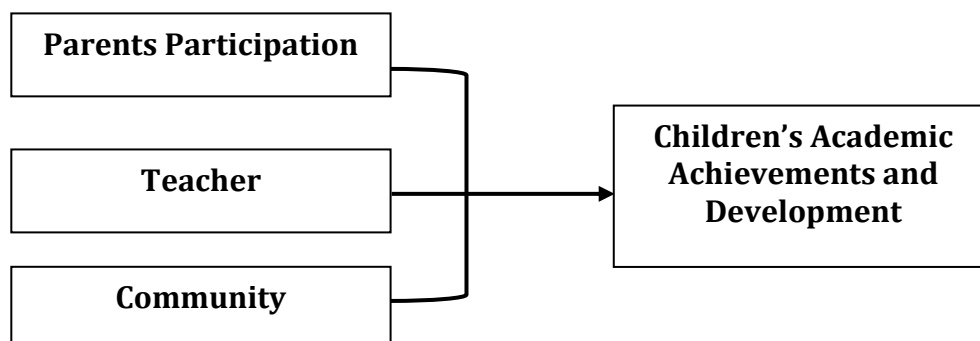
1. What are the strategies undertaken by parents in assisting children in developing their writing proficiency?
2. What are the gains obtained from supporting writing proficiency of children in developing their writing proficiency?

Theoretical Lens

This study was anchored on Epstein's (1995) Parental Involvement Theory. The theory posits that children's academic achievement and overall development improve when parents actively participate in their education and maintain strong partnerships with schools and communities. Joyce Epstein, one of the primary proponents of the theory, emphasized that effective learning occurs when families, teachers, and communities share responsibility in supporting students' growth through communication, guidance, and educational engagement both at home and in school (Epstein, 1995).

The study emphasizes that parents play an important role in improving learners' academic performance through guidance, encouragement, and support at home. In this study, parental involvement is examined in relation to the writing proficiency of learners in a last mile school. The study is limited only to parent support and does not include the influence of teachers or the community on learners' writing proficiency. Hence, this study is partially anchored on the theory.

Paradigm



Assumptions

In this study, it was assumed that parental support played a significant role in the development of learners' writing proficiency in last mile schools. It was also assumed that parents provided various forms of assistance, encouragement, and guidance that influenced learners' interest, confidence, and ability in writing. Furthermore, it was assumed that the participants provided honest and accurate responses regarding their experiences and

strategies in supporting learners' writing development despite the challenges present in geographically isolated and underserved areas.

METHODS

This section presents the methodological procedures used in the study. Specifically, it was discussed the research design, locale of the study, sample and sampling techniques, data gathering techniques, data analysis technique, and ethical considerations.

Research Design

This study employed qualitative descriptive research design. A qualitative descriptive research design is a type of qualitative research that aims to provide a clear and straightforward description of participants' experiences, perceptions, or events in everyday language while remaining close to the actual data. It is commonly applied when researchers want to understand a phenomenon in its natural context without developing complex theories or deep interpretations. This design is often used in education, nursing, health sciences, and social sciences to explore opinions, behaviors, and experiences through interviews, observations, or focus group discussions. One of its major advantages is its flexibility, simplicity, and accessibility for novice researchers, as it allows the use of various data collection methods while producing rich and practical descriptions of real-life situations. It is also cost-effective, less time-consuming, and useful for studies that require direct and comprehensive accounts of participants' perspectives (Hall & Liebenberg, 2024; Villamin et al., 2024). In this study, the parents' perceptions are considered and given focus.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in Region XII, Division of Sarangani, specifically in one of the last mile schools in the Alabel 4 District. The school was chosen as the locale because it presented unique challenges in delivering quality education, particularly in developing writing proficiency among learners. Studying this setting allowed for a deeper understanding of how contextual factors such as infrastructure, learning environment, and community circumstances affected learners' writing development in marginalized educational contexts.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The participants of this study were five (5) parents selected because of their active involvement in the learners' writing development and educational experiences. Their diverse perspectives provided valuable insights into the factors affecting the writing proficiency of learners within the school and home environment.

Purposive sampling was used as a method in selecting the study participants. It is a non-probability sampling technique in which the researcher intentionally selects participants based on specific characteristics, knowledge, or experiences relevant to the study (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025). It is commonly applied in qualitative research when the goal is to obtain in-depth, information-rich data from a particular group, especially when the population is small or specialized and closely aligned with the research problem (Nikolopoulou, 2023). One of its main advantages is that it allows for focused and efficient data collection by selecting participants who can provide meaningful insights, making it highly useful for exploring complex phenomena and generating detailed understanding (Stewart, 2024).

Data Gathering Technique

In-depth interviews were employed as the primary method of data collection in this study. In-depth interviews are a qualitative technique that involves one-on-one, open-ended conversations aimed at exploring participants' experiences, perspectives, and meanings in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2023). This method is commonly applied in qualitative research when the objective is to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon from the participants' point of view, particularly when dealing with complex or context-bound issues. One of its main advantages is

that it allows flexibility through probing and follow-up questions, enabling the researcher to obtain rich, detailed, and authentic data while also building rapport that encourages honest and reflective responses (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2023).

Data Analysis Technique

This study employed thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns and themes within the qualitative data collected from participants. The method is widely used in qualitative research because it offers a systematic yet flexible approach to examining participants' experiences, perspectives, and responses. According to Braun and Clarke (2023), thematic analysis facilitates rich and detailed interpretation while maintaining clarity and rigor. It is particularly suitable for interviews, focus group discussions, and open-ended responses, where understanding meanings and lived experiences is essential. Its flexibility allows application across diverse research frameworks and theoretical perspectives, while its effectiveness in handling large qualitative datasets enables the generation of in-depth insights into social and behavioral phenomena (Byrne, 2023). The interview transcripts were read several times to become familiar with the data. Significant statements related to each research question were coded and grouped into categories. Similar codes were then clustered to form emerging themes, which were supported by participant quotations, page numbers, and line references. Moreover, participants' behaviors, facial expressions, emotions, and gestures were incorporated into the analysis, providing a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of their experiences.

Trustworthiness

This study adhered to ethical standards through approval from Society for Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (SMILE) and proper research protocols. Informed consent was obtained, ensuring participants were fully informed, participated voluntarily, and could withdraw at any time without penalty, promoting autonomy, trust, and transparency. The study also upheld the four elements of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was ensured through accurate representation of participants' experiences; transferability through rich contextual descriptions; dependability through consistent procedures and audit trails; and confirmability through objective, data-grounded interpretations (Amankwaa, 2023; Forero et al., 2023). Confidentiality and data protection were strictly observed, with all data anonymized and handled according to the Data Privacy Act to prevent unauthorized access and protect participants' rights.

RESULTS

In this section the direct response of the study participants is narrated. Likewise, summary of findings and the modified paradigm was presented.

Strategies in Assisting to Develop Writing Proficiency

During the interviews with the study participants, Interviews revealed that their children encountered difficulties in writing. They were asked what strategies they used to address the problem and one of them said:

“Ginatultulan ko unsaon nila pagsulat sir. Gina, ginakuha nako ilang bukton isulat nimo, mao ni dong pagsulat, mona ni. Ginatudloan gani ako sila sa maayong pagsulat sir.” (Parent 1, Page 1, Lines 22-23)

Another participant said:

“Istoryahan siyag maayo ug taga-an siya nga oras nga isa ka oras nga imong lingkuran, para ang bata makapaminaw siyag maayo. Ug ang imong anak nga gikan sa eskwelahan, ayaw og kasab-eh, paminawa sa ang iyang ginapaistorya sa imoha.” (Parent 2, Page 1, Lines 29-31)

This idea was supported by another participant, saying:

“Amo siyang para mamana jud namo ang pagsulat sa bata labi ng English. Usahay di niya makuha, ako na pog gibalik sa iyahang time management. Kay kung way time management, dili gyud makaya sa bata nimo.” (Parent 3, Page 1, Lines 42-47)

Likewise, one participant also mentioned:

“Mag-research lang siya iyaha. Nangtingohaon jud nan niya nga naa pud siyay masabtan sa English. Mag-research ug unya maningkamot siya na naa pud siya masabtan.” (Parent 4, Page 2, Lines 42-51)

This concern was reiterated by another participant, saying:

“Kung makabalo na sila unsa ang meaning anang words nga English, pwede maka-construct na sila og kanang sentence gamay.” “Gipasulat gyud naku sa spelling ha. Usahay naga conduct pod kog spelling.” (Parent 5, Page 2, Lines 55-60)

During the interview, it was observed that the parents continued to attend to their daily responsibilities while participating in the conversation. One parent reminded her child to take care of the animals or plants if the child would come along to the farm because it was already afternoon. Another parent asked a customer in the store to transfer to another storekeeper because she still had something to do. One parent scolded his child because there was a visitor and he was being interviewed, while another reminded his children not to make noise because the surroundings were quiet. Despite these situations, the parents’ responses showed their strong desire for their children to learn, especially in developing writing proficiency in English. They expressed that they did not want their children to experience the same struggles they had in understanding English, which caused them regret. Their words and actions showed that parents are willing to do everything they can to support their children’s education and help them achieve a better future, even while facing financial and personal difficulties.

The parents’ emotions, gestures, and facial expressions also reflected the depth of their experiences and sacrifices. Some became emotional when recalling their struggles, while one parent expressed anger and frustration because his child no longer listened to him and said that he was not the teacher. Another parent’s voice became weak as she shared her regret for marrying early and not finishing school, while another showed happiness because two of his children had completed college. It was also observed that some parents struggled with limited resources, such as a dark home that depended on solar-powered light, and family problems such as a husband’s heavy drinking. Based on their responses and observed emotions, it was clear that although the parents had difficulty helping their children with English writing tasks, they still valued education and continued to assist in the ways they could. Their experiences showed that while they were guiding their children, they were also learning with them. These observations revealed that parents gained hope, fulfillment, happiness, and a sense of achievement whenever they saw improvements in their children’s writing proficiency and academic performance.

Gains from Assisting their Children Develop Writing Proficiency

During the interviews, it was noted that participants experienced positive gains from assisting their children in developing writing proficiency. They were also asked about strategies used to address or prevent the challenges they encountered. One of the participants shared:

“Maayo na ang ilang mga record sa eskwelahan sir.” “Ma-malipay pod ko nga isip ginikanan nga nakakat-on sila sa akong pagtudlo sa ilaha.” (Parent 1, Page 2, Lines 72-74)

Another participant further added:

“Dako kay tag kasuport sa atu-ang anak.” “Kay gikan pa siya sa balay, sa una-una nga motudlo sa bata, kita nga ginikanan.” “Para naapud tay katabang sa iyahang maestra or mais-maestro.” (Parent 2, Page 2, Lines 76-84)

This idea was supported by another participant who said:

“Mubo ang iyang kuha then second, ako man ang ginatabangan, motaas ang iyahang grades or points. Pinaagi atong pagtabang.” “Makatuon ka unsaon nimo pag-sabay ang imong anak kon para makakat-on siya.” (Parent 3, Page 2, Lines 86-94)

Likewise, one participant mentioned:

“Tudlo-an lang, sir. Tudlo-an nga kanang makabalo siya.” “Limitado man akoang nahibal-an sir kay grade six rako taman.” (Parent 4, Page 2, Lines 97-98)

This concern was reiterated by another participant, saying:

“Bisan ako isip giniklanan, bisan ako, naningkamot pod kog tuon.” “Kay kon duna koy makatun-an, mahatag pod nako sa akong bata.” (Parent 5, Page 3, Lines 107-109)

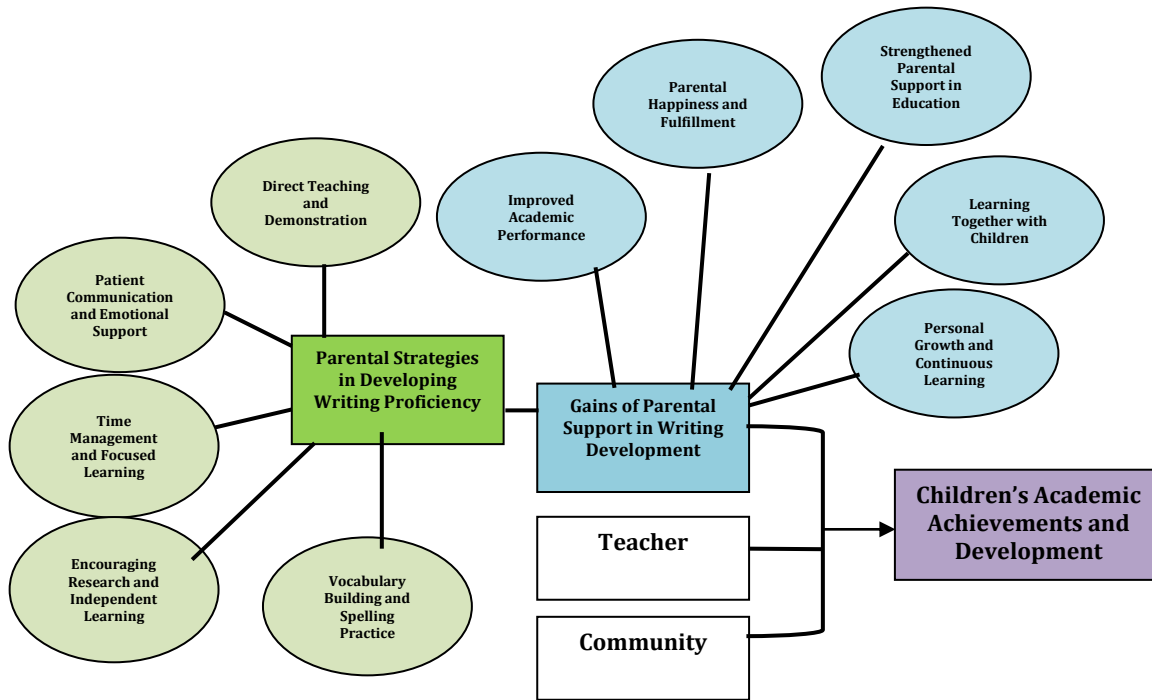
While one parent reflected on the experience, the tone of the parent’s voice and bright facial expression showed happiness and relief whenever the child was able to write. His voice was loud, which may be attributed to his partial deafness. Another parent reflected thoughtfully about the future of her children; her voice was strong and clear, carrying a contemplative tone rather than anger. One parent answered with a weak presence and tone, shaped by the hardships of their situation and past regrets. Several parents emphasized the importance of knowing how to read and write themselves in order to guide their children effectively. Throughout the interviews, the regret in their voices was evident, stemming from unfinished schooling and the struggles they faced in helping their children, particularly with writing in English. These reflections highlighted their growing awareness of the value of education, especially for their children’s future.

Initially, the parents were shy and hesitant to participate, but they became more comfortable once they learned that the questions would be translated into Bisaya. Their facial expressions, gestures, and emotions revealed both regret and strong hope for their children’s welfare, particularly in writing proficiency. Some parents were disciplinarians, scolding or glaring at children if they were noisy during the interview, showing their commitment to teaching and guidance. Observing their behavior at home and hearing their insights made it clear that their answers were sincere and honest. Based on their responses, gestures, and emotions, it was evident that the parents were deeply concerned about their children’s future, nostalgic about their own past experiences, and hopeful that their efforts would allow their children to achieve a better life. Despite hardships such as lack of food and educational materials, they remained determined to provide what they could, recognizing that completing school could offer their children opportunities for a different and improved life.

Summary of Findings

1. The strategies undertaken by parents in assisting children in developing their writing proficiency are direct teaching and demonstration, patient communication and emotional support, time management and focused learning, encouraging research and independent learning, and vocabulary building and spelling practice.
2. The gains obtained from supporting children in developing their writing proficiency are improved academic performance, parental happiness and fulfillment, strengthened parental support in education, learning together with children, and personal growth and continuous learning.

Modified Paradigm



DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings based on the experiences and responses shared by the participants regarding their involvement in developing their children's writing proficiency. The findings revealed how parents used different strategies, guidance, and support to help improve their children's writing skills despite the challenges they encountered. The emerging themes identified were Parental Strategies in Developing Writing Proficiency and Gains of Parental Support in Writing Development, which reflected the parents' commitment and active participation in their children's learning.

Parental Strategies in Developing Writing Proficiency

In this study, the findings revealed that the strategies undertaken by parents in assisting children in developing their writing proficiency are direct teaching and demonstration, patient communication and emotional support, time management and focused learning, encouraging research and independent learning, and vocabulary building and spelling practice.

This finding supports the study of Yang and Chen (2023), explaining that parental involvement positively affects children's writing ability, especially when parents actively guide and assist learning activities at home. Similarly, the finding also agrees with the study of Romero-González et al. (2023), stating that an active home literacy environment and continuous parental support contribute to children's language development, literacy skills, and academic success. In contrast, the current finding disagrees with the study of Hornby and Blackwell (2023), which claims that limited parental time, educational background, and inconsistent involvement reduce the effectiveness of parents in supporting their children's literacy and writing development, emphasizing that work responsibilities and lack of adequate knowledge are barriers to effective parental support. Furthermore, the present finding also contradicts the study of Park and Holloway (2023), which suggests that excessive parental involvement in academic activities may cause children to become too dependent on parental assistance rather than developing independent learning and writing skills. However, in the present study the participants still demonstrated active involvement, determination, and supportive guidance that encouraged their children to gradually improve their writing abilities through continuous practice and learning experiences.

Gains of Parental Support in Writing Development

In this study, the findings revealed that the gains obtained from supporting children in developing writing

proficiency are improved academic performance, parental happiness and fulfillment, strengthened parental support in education, learning together with children, and personal growth and continuous learning.

This finding is supported by Lara and Saracostti (2023), who found that parental involvement and active participation in children's learning positively influence academic achievement and literacy development because children become more motivated and guided in their educational activities. Similarly, it aligns with Romero-González et al. (2023), who revealed that an active home literacy environment strengthens children's language development, comprehension, and writing abilities through continuous parental guidance and encouragement, affirming that children's writing proficiency is enhanced when parents remain actively involved in teaching and supporting literacy activities at home.

In contrast, the current finding contrasts with the findings of Hornby and Blackwell (2023), who found that limited educational attainment, insufficient time, and work responsibilities reduce parents' ability to consistently support their children's writing and literacy development, implying that parental limitations weaken the effectiveness of academic support provided at home. Furthermore, Park and Holloway (2023), who argued that excessive parental involvement in academic activities may place pressure on children and reduce independent learning when parents become overly controlling in educational tasks, suggesting that parental support may not always positively contribute to children's literacy development when it limits children's autonomy and confidence in learning independently.

While the studies of Hornby and Blackwell (2023) and Park and Holloway (2023) involved broader contexts and larger participant groups, their focus was mainly on identifying limitations and challenges of parental involvement in children's academic learning, whereas the present study, despite involving only a limited number of participants, used a qualitative approach that allowed me to deeply explore the lived experiences, gains, and personal efforts of parents in supporting their children's writing proficiency, capturing rich and contextualized insights that showed how parents remained determined, fulfilled, and actively involved in their children's literacy development despite their limitations and struggles.

Implications for Theory and Practice

The findings of this study have important implications for theory and practice, particularly in strengthening parental involvement and literacy development programs in education. Educational leaders and teachers may design and implement training, mentoring, orientations, and intervention programs that equip parents with the necessary knowledge and skills to support their children's writing proficiency. Schools may also encourage parents to actively participate in school-related activities and literacy programs, recognizing them as essential partners in the learning process. Through these initiatives, parents can further develop their own writing and communication skills, enabling them to provide more effective academic support to their children at home. Moreover, educational leaders may collaborate with external stakeholders, such as the Barangay Local Government Unit (BLGU), to secure funding and resources that can sustain the implementation of these programs. Inviting qualified speakers and resource persons may also help educate and empower parents by providing them with relevant strategies and insights that contribute to their children's academic growth and literacy development.

Future Directions

Future researchers may apply mediation analysis using gains of parental support in writing development as a mediating variable on the correlation between parental strategies in developing children's writing proficiency and children's academic achievements and development.

Additionally, an **Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)** may be conducted to develop and validate an instrument for parental strategies in developing children's writing proficiency, parental strategies in developing writing proficiency and children's academic achievements and development. Use the sub-themes as corresponding indicators.

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