

When Time Slips Away: Understanding Student Tardiness Through Teachers' Lenses

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe the lived experiences of the Junior High School teachers towards the tardiness of junior high school students. The data were obtained from fifteen (15) participants. A purposive sampling technique was used in the selection of the participants of the study. The data were obtained using in-depth interviews. Emerging themes highlighted on the experiences are Tardiness as a Disruptive Forces in the Classroom, Recognizable Patterns in Tardiness Occurrence, and Teacher Management Strategies and Interventions. In addition, there are six (6) core ideas that have emerged: late arrivals interrupt lesson momentum and derail instructional flow, students who arrive late miss critical instructional content and fall behind, tardiness peaks during first period morning classes and post-break transitions, certain students are identifiably and repeatedly tardy forming a recognizable group, teachers set clear rules, enforce consistent consequences, and model punctuality, and teachers employ dialogic and referral-based approaches — conferences, parent involvement, and guidance referrals. Moreover, the challenges experienced by the teachers focus on Disruption of Instructional Flow and Classroom Management, Academic Performance and Learning Gaps, and Teacher-Student Relationship and Classroom Rapport, with six core ideas: tardiness interrupts lesson continuity and forces repetition, tardiness wastes instructional time and disrupts time management, late students miss critical lesson content resulting in knowledge gaps, repeated tardiness leads to missed assessments and academic decline, repeated tardiness erodes trust and lowers student engagement, and teachers maintain open communication and supportive rapport despite tardiness. Furthermore, the coping mechanism focuses on Proactive Rule-Setting and Enforcement of Accountability, Individualized Student Engagement and Pastoral Support, and Non-Disruptive Classroom Routines for Late Entry Management, with six core ideas: establishing clear expectations and consistent classroom rules on punctuality from the start of the school year, using reward systems and positive reinforcement to encourage punctual behavior, conducting private, one-on-one conversations with chronically late students to understand underlying causes, involving parents and guardians in addressing persistent tardiness through communication and conferences, implementing a quiet/silent entry routine where late students enter without interrupting the ongoing lesson, and continuing the lesson uninterrupted and addressing the late student after class using nonverbal cues during entry. On top of that, the recommendations of the participants focus on Policy Strengthening and Consistent Enforcement, Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration and Communication, and Home Environment and Parental Role in Punctuality. In addition, six core ideas emerge: Clear, Consistent, and Unified Tardiness Policies, Redesigning the Tardiness Policy for Fairness and Support, Coordinated Effort Among All Stakeholders, Institutionalizing School-Community and Parent Partnerships, Parents as Primary Agents of Routine and Discipline, and Parental Monitoring and Involvement in Student Performance. Therefore, it is recommended that educational institutions, in implementing similar policies, consider these student experiences to optimize policy effectiveness and foster a sustainable school environment, through Policy Strengthening and Consistent Enforcement, Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration and Communication, and Home Environment and Parental Role in Punctuality.

Keywords: Student Tardiness, Classroom Management, Teacher Interventions

INTRODUCTION

Student tardiness is one of the most persistent yet least examined behavioral disruptions in educational settings, particularly from the perspective of those who experience it most directly — the classroom teachers. While existing literature has documented its negative effects on academic performance, classroom engagement, and instructional continuity, the lived experiences of teachers navigating this phenomenon daily remain largely underexplored. Time in schools is not a neutral container of learning but a deeply socially constructed reality, shaped by customs, norms, and values that govern how teachers and students interact and assign meaning to institutional schedules (Szplit et al., 2024). Within this framework, tardiness constitutes more than a logistical inconvenience — it is a rupture of the symbolic and institutional order of schooling. It requires teachers to break instructional flow, often necessitating reteaching, thereby affecting the engagement and learning of all students present (Scribd Research, 2024), while persistent classroom disruptions have been shown to negatively affect teacher health, reduce teaching quality, and diminish student motivation and performance (Wettstein & Scherzinger, 2025). At the systemic level, tardiness was reported as a concern by approximately 30 percent of public-school principals in a 2021–2022 survey, ranking higher than vandalism or theft (TEAMLEASE, 2022, as cited in Gano et al., 2024), and students who arrive late regularly report higher levels of pressure, embarrassment, and disengagement from classroom activities (Gano et al., 2025). Despite this, there remains a significant gap in research on how student tardiness affects the work environment of teachers, with the phenomenon continuing to be overlooked in educational research and school-based health promotion practice (Warne et al., 2020).

This study addresses that gap through a qualitative phenomenological inquiry into teachers' lived experiences of student tardiness. Phenomenology provides a theoretical tool for educational research that allows researchers to describe and understand complex phenomena through the lens of human social experience (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022). Rooted in Husserl's transcendental philosophy and extended by Heidegger's hermeneutic turn — which asserts that meaning is already inherent within lived experience itself (Farrell, 2020) — phenomenology foregrounds the consciousness and interpretive frameworks of those who live through a phenomenon. While transcendental phenomenology seeks a pure description of experience as it appears in consciousness, hermeneutic phenomenology further calls on the researcher to interpret the meaning embedded in participants' lived accounts (Ruhana et al., 2023). The suitability of this approach for teacher-centered inquiry is affirmed by recent scholarship, including Liang et al.'s (2024) phenomenological study of secondary school teachers encountering students with mental health issues, which demonstrated the capacity of this methodology to surface the depth and nuance of teachers' professional experiences in ways that quantitative methods cannot. By centering teachers' voices, this study moves beyond behavioral description toward a deeper understanding of how tardiness is felt, interpreted, and managed in the lived school day — contributing to a more empathetically grounded and contextually informed conversation about student behavior, classroom climate, and the realities of teaching.

Research Objectives

The objective of this study is to determine the live experiences of Junior High School teachers towards the tardiness of Junior High School Students. This study is guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To describe the experiences of the Junior High School Teachers towards student tardiness in Davao Central College.
2. To account the challenges experienced by the Junior High School Teachers towards student tardiness in Davao Central College.
3. To identify the coping mechanisms employed by the Junior High School Teachers towards student tardiness in Davao Central College.
4. To solicit recommendations of the Junior High School Teachers towards student tardiness in Davao Central College.

Research Questions

1. In your years of teaching, how would you describe your overall experience dealing with students who come to class late?"
 - 1.1. Can you walk me through a specific situation where a student's tardiness significantly affected the flow of your lesson? What happened and how did it unfold?
 - 1.2. How do you typically feel — emotionally and professionally — when students arrive late, especially during critical parts of your lesson?
 - 1.3. Have you noticed any patterns or recurring trends in student tardiness — such as certain times of day, specific students, or particular subjects? Could you elaborate on what you have observed?
2. What do you consider to be the most significant challenges that student tardiness brings to you as a teacher and to the classroom as a whole?
 - 2.1. In what ways does student tardiness disrupt your instructional delivery, time management, and the learning continuity of the other students in the room?
 - 2.2. How does repeated tardiness affect your relationship with the late student — in terms of trust, academic engagement, and classroom rapport?
 - 2.3. Are there any systemic or school-level factors — such as policies, administrative support, or structural issues — that you feel contribute to or worsen the challenge of student tardiness?
3. As a teacher, what strategies or approaches have you personally developed or adopted to manage and cope with the ongoing issue of student tardiness in your classroom?
 - 3.1. Can you describe a specific strategy or routine that you have found to be most effective in minimizing classroom disruption when a student arrives late? How did you develop this approach?
 - 3.2. How do you balance addressing the behavior of the late student while ensuring that the rest of the class remains engaged and the lesson continues smoothly?
 - 3.3. Have you sought any external support — from colleagues, school administrators, or professional development resources — to help you better handle student tardiness? If so, what worked best?
4. Based on your experiences as a teacher, what recommendations would you offer to school administrators, policy-makers, parents, and fellow educators to address the problem of student tardiness more effectively?
 - 4.1. If you could design or revise the school's tardiness policy from scratch, what key elements or principles would you prioritize to make it both fair to students and supportive of teachers?
 - 4.2. What role do you believe parents and the home environment play in student tardiness, and how can schools build stronger partnerships with families to collectively address this issue?
 - 4.3. What advice would you give to a new or beginning teacher who is struggling with frequent tardiness in their classroom and does not yet have established strategies for managing it?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

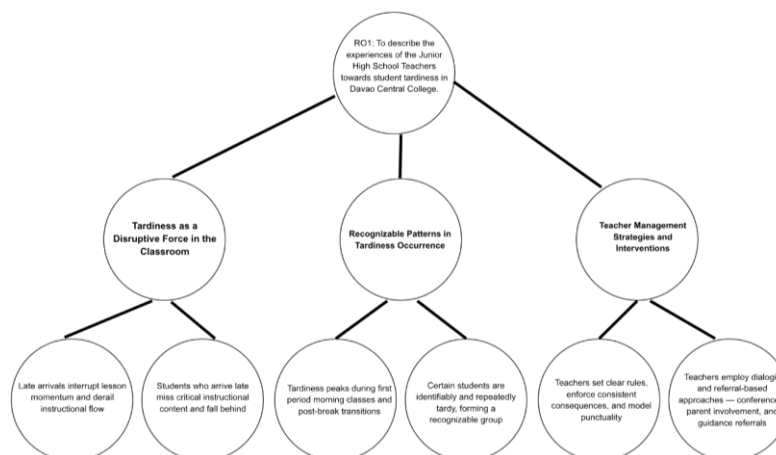
Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory provides a relevant lens for understanding student tardiness. This theory posits that human behavior is shaped through the dynamic interaction of personal factors, behavioral patterns, and environmental influences, a concept known as reciprocal determinism. In the context of student tardiness, teachers' observations can reveal how students' beliefs about punctuality (personal factors), their habitual lateness (behavior), and external influences such as school policies, classroom climate, and home environment (environmental factors) interact to produce recurring tardiness. Furthermore, the concept of self-efficacy—students' belief in their ability to manage time effectively and arrive on time—plays a crucial role in shaping their punctuality behaviors. By applying this framework, the study can better analyze how teachers perceive the causes of tardiness, the coping mechanisms they employ, and the recommendations they propose, ultimately offering deeper insights into addressing and reducing student lateness in educational settings.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative-phenomenological research approach to explore the lived experiences of junior high school teachers. As Nassaji (2020) explains, qualitative research involves a naturalistic exploration of non-numerical data, aiming to achieve a deep understanding of phenomena rather than to control variables. This approach emphasizes processes and patterns over final outcomes, offering rich contextual and interpretive insights into how individuals perceive and make sense of their social reality. The phenomenological design was specifically selected because it enables researchers to gather rich, firsthand accounts from participants, thereby illuminating their subjective experiences and personal perceptions. The study was conducted in Davao City, Philippines, involving 15 junior high school teachers. This sample size aligns with methodological recommendations from established scholars: Creswell (2007) suggests 3–25 participants for phenomenological studies, Bernard (2013) supports this range, and Morse (1994, as cited in Bekele & Ago, 2022) recommends a minimum of six participants. Purposive sampling guided the selection of participants. As Nikolopoulou (2023) explains, this non-probability sampling technique involves selecting individuals based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives. Semi-structured interviews were utilized as the primary data collection instrument. According to George (2023), semi-structured interviews involve asking questions within a predetermined framework while allowing flexibility to probe and explore emerging ideas or themes. The data analysis process followed a rigorous thematic analysis framework. As Caulfield (2023) describes, thematic analysis involves systematically examining qualitative data to identify recurring patterns of meaning. The researchers followed a six-step process: familiarization with the data, systematic coding, generation of initial themes, review and refinement of themes, definition and labeling of final themes, and the writing of findings supported by evidence. This structured procedure helped minimize confirmation bias while ensuring analytical rigor and credibility. Finally, the researchers adhered to ethical standards by securing institutional permission from Davao Central College prior to data collection and obtaining informed consent from all participants.

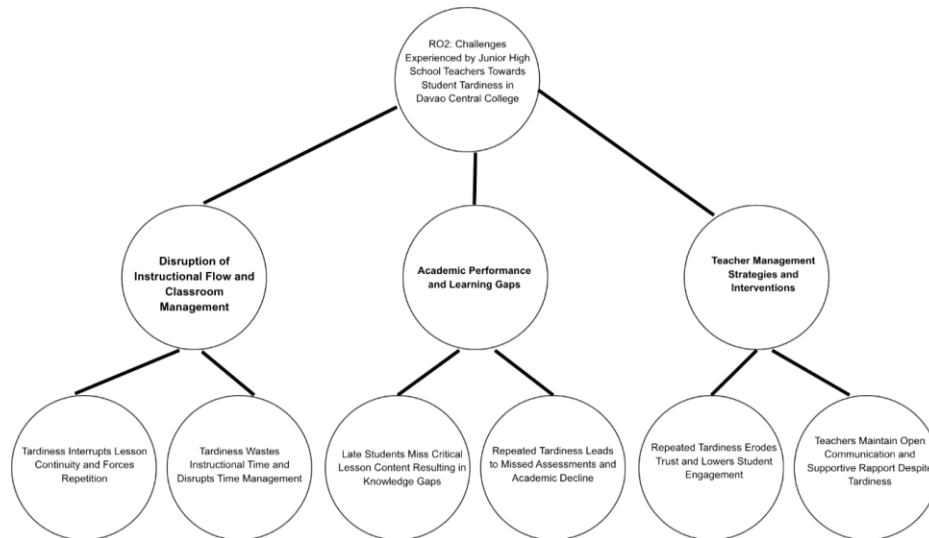
RESULT

Figure 1: The experiences of the Junior High School Teachers towards student tardiness in Davao Central College.



As shown in Figure 1, from the collected data during the in-depth interview (IDI) of the participants, three (3) major themes have emerged in describing the experiences of Junior High School teachers towards student tardiness in Davao Central College. These are: Tardiness as a Disruptive Force in the Classroom, Recognizable Patterns in Tardiness Occurrence, and Teacher Management Strategies and Interventions. Also, six (6) core ideas have emerged; late arrivals interrupt lesson momentum and derail instructional flow, students who arrive late miss critical instructional content and fall behind, tardiness peaks during first period morning classes and post-break transitions, certain students are identifiably and repeatedly tardy forming a recognizable group, teachers set clear rules and enforce consistent consequences while modeling punctuality, and teachers employ dialogic and referral-based approaches such as conferences, parent involvement, and guidance referrals.

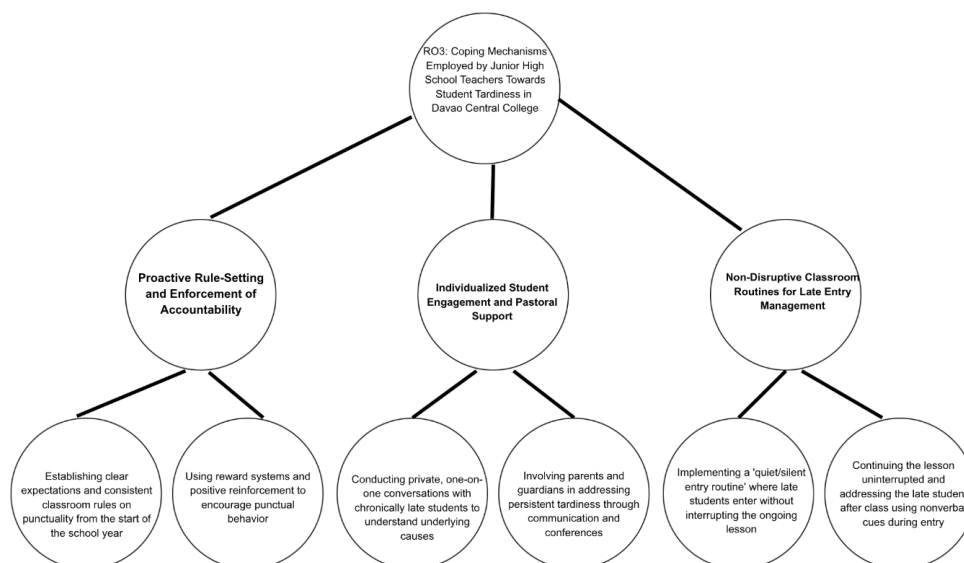
Figure 2: The Challenges experienced by the Junior High School Teachers towards student tardiness in Davao Central College.



As shown in Figure 2, from the collected data during the in-depth interview (IDI) of the participants, three (3) major themes have emerged in describing the challenges experienced by Junior High School teachers towards student tardiness in Davao Central College. These are: Disruption of Instructional Flow and Classroom Management, Academic Performance and Learning Gaps, and Teacher Management Strategies and Interventions.

Also, six (6) core ideas have emerged; tardiness interrupts lesson continuity and forces repetition, tardiness wastes instructional time and disrupts time management, late students miss critical lesson content resulting in knowledge gaps, repeated tardiness leads to missed assessments and academic decline, repeated tardiness erodes trust and lowers student engagement, and teachers maintain open communication and supportive rapport despite tardiness.

Figure 3: The coping mechanisms employed by the Junior High School Teachers towards student tardiness in Davao Central College.

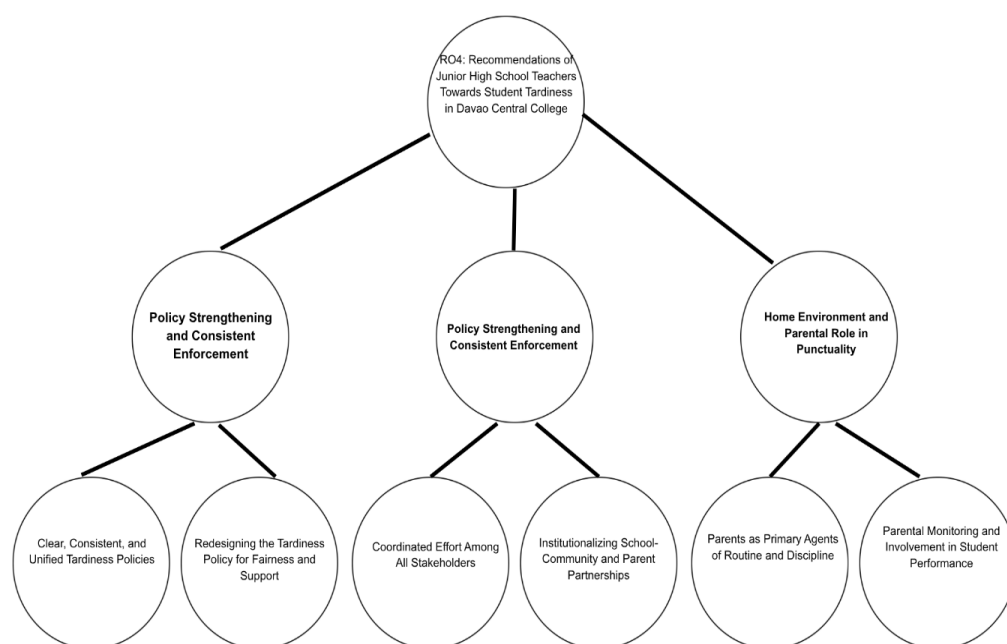


As shown in Figure 3, from the collected data during the in-depth interview (IDI) of the participants, three (3) major themes have emerged in the coping mechanisms employed by Junior High School teachers towards student

tardiness. These are: Proactive Rule-Setting and Enforcement of Accountability, Individualized Student Engagement and Pastoral Support, and Non-Disruptive Classroom Routines for Late Entry Management.

Additionally, six (6) core ideas have emerged, namely: establishing clear expectations and consistent classroom rules on punctuality from the start of the school year; using reward systems and positive reinforcement to encourage punctual behavior; conducting private, one-on-one conversations with chronically late students to understand underlying causes; involving parents and guardians in addressing persistent tardiness through communication and conferences; implementing a quiet or silent entry routine where late students enter without interrupting the ongoing lesson; and continuing the lesson uninterrupted while addressing late students after class using nonverbal cues during entry.

Figure 4: Recommendations of the Junior High School Teachers towards student tardiness in Davao Central College.



As shown in Figure 4, from the collected data during the in-depth interview (IDI) of the participants, three (3) major themes have emerged in the recommendations of Junior High School teachers towards student tardiness. These are: Policy Strengthening and Consistent Enforcement, Coordinated Effort and Stakeholder Collaboration, and Home Environment and Parental Role in Punctuality.

Furthermore, six (6) core ideas have emerged, namely: establishing clear, consistent, and unified tardiness policies; redesigning the tardiness policy for fairness and support; promoting coordinated effort among all stakeholders; institutionalizing school-community and parent partnerships; recognizing parents as primary agents of routine and discipline; and enhancing parental monitoring and involvement in student performance.

Late arrivals interrupt lesson momentum and derail instructional flow

The most immediately visible consequence of student tardiness, as described by the participants, is the interruption of instructional momentum. Teachers reported that when a student enters the classroom late, the entire class is momentarily destabilized — attention shifts, the teacher is forced to pause, and the carefully scaffolded flow of the lesson is broken. This disruption was described not as a singular inconvenience but as a recurring pedagogical challenge that demands real-time management and adjustment.

Several participants articulated this experience with notable specificity. One teacher recounted how a student's late arrival during a timed group debate completely derailed an entire activity, including its culminating reflection:

"Each arrival required me to pause, re-explain the task, and help them find their groups. This interrupted the momentum of the debate, caused frustration among group members, and reduced the time available for the activity. By the end, we were unable to complete the reflection portion of the

"I was halfway through my lesson when a student suddenly opened the door, wearing a cocky smile and a disheveled uniform. His entrance caught the attention of the class, which made me pause the discussion for a moment to remind everyone not to come to class late." (IDI-P15)

"Class disruptions really comes into play, wherein the flow of the lesson and the attention of the other students was also disrupted in which teachers now have difficulty in getting the attention of the students again." (IDI-P10)

The disruption of instructional momentum caused by late-arriving students is well-documented in educational research. Kraft and Monti-Nussbaum (2021) found that interruptions to lesson momentum compelled teachers to spend additional time restating directions, reviewing earlier content, and re-energizing students, thereby negatively affecting both the potential time available for learning and the volume of material teachers could cover

Students who arrive late miss critical instructional content and fall behind

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Beyond the disruption to the class as a whole, teachers also described the significant learning disadvantage that tardiness creates for the late student themselves. When students arrive after key instructions have been delivered — especially during activity-based, hands-on, or sequential lesson formats — they enter a class already in motion, without the foundational context needed to meaningfully participate.

"I haven't been teaching for many years yet, but based on my experience, it is disappointing to see students arrive late, especially during class discussions. It disrupts the flow of the lesson and causes them to miss important key points." (IDI-P15)

"There was a time when a student came in late while I was introducing a new lesson. They missed important instructions and asked questions that were already explained, which interrupted the class. I had to repeat some parts, and it affected the flow of the lesson." (IDI-P9)

Students who arrive late to class face a direct and measurable learning disadvantage, as tardiness results in missed instructional hours, failure to receive critical announcements, and inability to follow sequential lesson content (Serut et al., 2023). The effects of tardiness extend across grades, academic output, attentiveness, and the reception of important instructions in class. Students who arrive late tend to miss vital instructions, disrupt ongoing lessons, and struggle to catch up with their peers, collectively contributing to lower academic achievement, while recurring lateness has further been linked to declining motivation to learn. These compounding disadvantages are especially pronounced in activity-based or sequential lesson formats, where entering a class already in motion leaves the late student without the foundational context necessary for meaningful participation (Mohamed Farais et al., 2025).

Tardiness peaks during first period morning classes and post-break transitions

Across virtually all fifteen participants, there was strong and consistent agreement that tardiness is most prevalent during two specific windows of the school day: the first class of the morning, and the period immediately following breaks — particularly recess and lunch. This temporal pattern speaks to the role of transitional moments in the school schedule as structural vulnerability points for punctuality. The challenge of transitioning from an unstructured state — sleep, leisure, or informal socializing — into the structured discipline of a classroom appears to be where tardiness is most likely to emerge.

"Yes, I've noticed that tardiness is more common during early morning classes and after breaks. It is also more frequent among students with transportation challenges or weaker time management skills." (IDI-P1)

"It happens more often during early morning classes and right after lunch breaks, when students tend to lose track of time." (IDI-P2)

"Every time after recess, this group of students, about 3 or 4 always arrived late. I let them stay outside the classroom as a consequence then talk to them after the class." (IDI-P14)

Moral et al. (2023) found that the timing of class schedules significantly affects students' ability to be punctual, with morning classes posing the greatest challenge to on-time attendance. Students tend to be more punctual when classes begin at a time that optimizes the sleep and preparation they need, suggesting that the difficulty of transitioning from rest to structured learning is a key driver of tardiness. Significant differences in student attention levels were also observed at different times of day, with attentiveness declining as the hour progresses — a pattern further complicated by the disruptions that occur during breaks.

Certain students are identifiably and repeatedly tardy, forming a recognizable group

Beyond the temporal patterns, teachers also described a student-level pattern: tardiness is not evenly distributed across the student population. Rather, it is concentrated among a subset of identifiable students who are repeatedly, consistently late. These chronic offenders are known to their teachers by name and circumstance — their tardiness is not an anomaly but a defining feature of their school behavior. This observation has important implications for targeted intervention and individualized support.

"I have observed recurring patterns in student tardiness involving four students who consistently arrived late in my first period math

"Every Monday, often times when it's the start of the week specific students are late." (IDI-P5)

"There are also a few specific students who are repeatedly late, often due to poor time management or personal routines." (IDI-P2)

Recent research supports the observation that student tardiness is not randomly distributed but is concentrated among a specific subset of "identifiable" students who exhibit recurring behavioral patterns (Quyyum & Bhatti, 2024). These chronic patterns often serve as early warning signs for deeper underlying issues, such as poor self-regulation, mental health struggles, or complex family responsibilities, which teachers are uniquely positioned to recognize through consistent observation (LightSpeed Systems, 2025). Furthermore, identifying these specific students allows for the shift from generic punitive measures to targeted, individualized interventions—such as family outreach and tailored support plans—which have been shown to more effectively improve attendance and engagement than standard disciplinary actions (Shebani et al., 2025).

Teachers set clear rules, enforce consistent consequences, and model punctuality

The most widely shared management strategy among participants was the proactive establishment of clear classroom expectations regarding attendance and punctuality. Teachers described how setting rules at the beginning of the school year — and consistently enforcing them throughout — created a classroom culture in which tardiness was less likely to occur and, when it did, was addressed predictably and fairly. Several participants also emphasized the importance of teacher modeling: arriving to class on time themselves as a visible demonstration of the values they sought to cultivate in their students.

One teacher articulated the interconnection between teacher modeling and student behavior with particular clarity:

"In my three years of teaching...I believe this is largely due to the clear classroom rules I establish and consistently enforce, as well as my own punctuality, which sets an example for my learners." (IDI-P11)

"Over the years, I set clear expectations early and enforce fair consequences. I have learned that consistency and empathy are very important." (IDI-P4)

"Setting clear expectations and being consistent. Address lateness right away with a calm reminder." (IDI-P14)

Hepburn and Beamish (2020) found that proactive classroom management—centered on clearly establishing behavioral expectations and consistently enforcing them—reduces disruptions and improves student engagement. Their study emphasized that simply posting rules without explicitly teaching and reinforcing them is insufficient; follow-through and consistency are essential to shaping positive student behavior. These findings support the idea that teachers who model punctuality and enforce attendance rules predictably create a classroom culture where tardiness is effectively minimized.

Teachers employ dialogic and referral-based approaches — conferences, parent involvement, and guidance referrals

For cases of persistent or serious tardiness, the participating teachers described escalating beyond individual classroom management toward more structured, relational, and institutional interventions. These included direct dialogues with students, formal conferences, involvement of parents or guardians, and referrals to the school's guidance office. These strategies reflect a recognition that chronic tardiness is often symptomatic of deeper issues that require coordinated, multi-stakeholder responses.

The most comprehensive account of this escalation protocol was provided by one participant whose response outlined a systematic, step-by-step intervention process:

"If students are consistently late, I immediately ask them for the reasons. I conduct conferences with the students, and if their reasons are family-related, I actively involve their parents or guardians...when the situation is beyond my capacity to handle, I refer them to the guidance office." (IDI-P12)

"Every time after recess, this group of students, about 3 or 4 always arrived late. I let them stay outside the classroom as a consequence then talk to them after the class." (IDI-14)

"I spoke with the student about the importance of coming on time, especially for hands-on lessons. From that experience, I learned to prepare quick catch-up instructions and reinforce punctuality to avoid delays in future classes." (IDI#2)

Tardiness Interrupts Lesson Continuity and Forces Repetition

Cimafranca and Cimafranca (2024) explored the shared experiences of guidance counselors and classroom advisers in managing behavioral problems — including tardiness, absenteeism, and cutting classes — among junior high school students in Philippine public schools, finding that these issues significantly disrupted the educational process. Their study identified that key intervention processes involved collaboration among classroom advisers, guidance counselors, students, and parents, as well as follow-up actions and ongoing monitoring of student progress after interventions. Significant challenges included unsupportive parents and uncooperative students, which hindered the effectiveness of interventions, underscoring that chronic tardiness often requires coordinated, multi-stakeholder responses beyond what individual teachers can manage alone.

The most direct and immediate challenge described by participants was the break in lesson continuity that occurs each time a student enters the classroom late. Teachers consistently reported that the arrival of a tardy student compels them to halt the lesson in progress, backtrack on already-delivered content, and repeat key instructions for the benefit of the latecomer — at the expense of those who arrived on time. This involuntary

cycle of repetition was identified as not only wasteful but also demoralizing to both teacher and punctual students.

"the most significant challenges are interruptions in lesson flow, loss of instructional time, and difficulty maintaining classroom routines," (IDI-P1)

"often miss key directions, which leads to repeated explanations and takes time away from others," (IDI-P2)

Student tardiness has been widely recognized as a significant disruptor of classroom instruction and overall academic progress. Okoronkwo et al. (2021) found that lateness to classes has a strong and statistically significant correlation with academic performance, establishing that students who consistently arrive late are at a heightened risk of poor academic outcomes in tertiary institutions. Tardiness disrupts the flow of instruction, compromises instructional time, and hampers the learning experiences of both tardy students and their peers — with habitual tardiness further cultivating negative habits and attitudes that impede overall academic engagement (Gano et al., 2024). Moldero et al. (2024) further established that students identified as tardy predominantly carried low general weighted averages, and that the classroom environment was the most significant factor affecting their academic standing, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to address the cascading consequences of chronic lateness. These findings closely align with the present study's focus on how late arrivals disrupt lesson flow and force teachers to repeat already-delivered content, ultimately disadvantaging punctual students and undermining instructional continuity.

Tardiness Wastes Instructional Time and Disrupts Time Management

Beyond the qualitative disruption to lesson coherence, participants also identified the quantitative loss of instructional minutes as a significant challenge. Time, as a finite classroom resource, is systematically eroded when teachers must accommodate late arrivals through pauses, re-explanations, and activity adjustments. Several participants articulated this in direct and unambiguous terms.

"Waste of time. Hard to follow up if they have lacking outputs," (IDI-P3)

"planned activities may need to be shortened or rushed," (IDI-P8)

"tardiness breaks the lesson flow, wastes time, and distracts other students, making it harder to keep learning on track." (IDI-P13)

The loss of instructional time due to classroom interruptions — including student tardiness — is a well-documented concern in educational research. Kraft and Monti-Nussbaum (2021) found that a typical classroom is interrupted over 2,000 times per year, and that these interruptions and the disruptions they cause result in the loss of between 10 to 20 days of instructional time. Notably, even when tardy students are removed from the count, classrooms still lose the equivalent of nearly 6.7 days of instructional time annually from other external interruptions alone, underscoring how significantly tardiness compounds the overall problem (Kraft & Monti-Nussbaum, 2021). The study also revealed that administrators tend to systematically underestimate the frequency and negative consequences of these interruptions, suggesting that the erosion of teaching time is often unacknowledged at the institutional level (Kraft & Monti-Nussbaum, 2021). These findings directly support the present study's assertion that tardiness wastes instructional minutes, forces teachers to shorten or rush planned activities, and disrupts the overall flow of classroom learning.

Late Students Miss Critical Lesson Content Resulting in Knowledge Gaps

Several participants highlighted the fundamental academic problem that underlies student tardiness: when a student is not present for the beginning of a lesson, the content delivered in their absence constitutes an irretrievable gap in their learning. Teachers expressed concern and, in some cases, a sense of helplessness in addressing this gap within the limited time available for instruction.

"if student/s arrived late in the class, they miss the discussion or important information," (IDI-P4)

"students fall behind in the lessons" and that "important parts of the lesson may be missed, which can affect their performance." (IDI-P12)

"It challenges me a lot on how I could help them recover the lessons that they have missed," (IDI-P5)

Missing the beginning of a lesson due to tardiness creates significant and lasting knowledge gaps that are difficult for students to recover from. Karuppannan et al. (2021) found that student tardiness is a growing concern across educational settings, with lateness disturbing instructional continuity and distressing not only the latecomer but also the teacher's time and the motivation of other students — findings that highlight how tardiness disrupts the entire learning ecosystem. The study further affirmed that recurring lateness directly relates to decreasing academic performance and diminished inspiration to learn, establishing a clear and consequential link between late arrival and widening knowledge gaps among students (Karuppannan et al., 2021). Asebias et al. (2025) similarly concluded that when students arrive late, they miss crucial learning activities and disrupt the classroom environment, causing stress for educators and hindering the academic progress of their peers, making early and consistent intervention essential to prevent the escalation of these academic and behavioral consequences. These findings corroborate the present study's concern that when students miss the critical opening content of a lesson, they fall behind their peers and teachers are left struggling with the challenge of helping them recover what was lost.

Repeated Tardiness Leads to Missed Assessments and Academic Decline

Beyond missed lesson content, participants identified the compounding academic consequences of repeated tardiness — specifically, the loss of opportunities to participate in assessments, submissions, and graded activities. These missed academic engagements accumulate over time and materially affect students' grades and academic standing.

"often missed homework submissions, were unable to answer or completely missed quizzes, and were absent during both graded and non-graded group activities," (IDI-P11)

"review sessions are not always enough to cover the points they failed to hear" (IDI-P15)

"tardiness could be the result of their low performance level academically." (IDI-P10)

Repeated tardiness has been consistently linked to cumulative academic decline, as students who arrive late miss graded activities and fall progressively further behind their peers. Serut et al. (2023) established that tardiness widely affects academic performance because of missed instructional hours, and may cause failed accomplishments in homework, written exams, and projects — consequences that compound over time and seriously impair a student's overall academic standing. Similarly, Moldero et al. (2024) found that most student respondents identified as tardy or absent carried low general weighted averages, reinforcing the strong correlation between poor punctuality and diminished academic outcomes. Their study further emphasized that students' tardiness and absenteeism are influenced by multiple overlapping factors, underscoring the urgency of developing targeted interventions to prevent further academic deterioration (Moldero et al., 2024). These findings align with the present study's concern that repeated tardiness leads to a pattern of missed assessments and graded engagements that accumulate into measurable and lasting academic decline.

Repeated Tardiness Erodes Trust and Lowers Student Engagement

Participants reflected on how repeated tardiness, over time, diminishes the relational foundation of the teacher-student relationship. Trust — as a component of that relationship — was particularly identified as a

casualty of chronic lateness, with several teachers noting that they begin to form lower expectations of persistently tardy students, anticipating their unreliability not just in punctuality but in other academic commitments as well.

"affect trust when expectations are repeatedly unmet, engagement because late students miss key concepts, and rapport if the student feels embarrassed or defensive." (IDI-P8)

"a bit strained since they miss important lessons and seem less consistent in meeting expectations," (IDI-P14)

The quality of the teacher-student relationship is a critical factor in shaping student engagement, and any behavior that consistently disrupts this relational dynamic — such as tardiness — can erode it over time. Zhou (2021) found that a favorable relationship between teachers and students can significantly influence students' academic engagement, with positive rapport encouraging students to willingly participate in the learning process. The study further established that teacher-student rapport functions as a strong interpersonal connection in classroom settings, and that disruptions to this connection — whether behavioral or relational — can undermine students' motivation and active involvement in learning (Zhou, 2021). Consistent with these findings, students who regularly arrive late have been reported to experience higher levels of embarrassment and disengagement from classroom activities, further straining the relational dynamic between teacher and student (Mohamed Farais et al., 2025). These findings directly support the present study's observation that repeated tardiness gradually erodes trust and lowers student engagement, as teachers begin to form diminished expectations of persistently late students.

Teachers Maintain Open Communication and Supportive Rapport Despite Tardiness

Despite the relational strains described above, participants also demonstrated a consistent professional and pedagogical commitment to maintaining positive relationships with tardy students. Rather than responding to tardiness with punitive distance or emotional withdrawal, many teachers described proactive efforts to understand the student's circumstances, communicate openly, and sustain a supportive classroom environment.

"Our relationship is not really affected because I have to listen first the reason of being late. Also, I allow them to understand that there are rules to follow." (IDI-P3)

"regularly talked with these students and also communicated with their parents at least once every quarter to address the issue." (IDI-P11)

"Trust is intact, depends on the reasons. Sometimes conference may result to know more the student and by then they will follow the set rules," (IDI-P4)

Research consistently shows that when teachers respond to tardiness through supportive, non-punitive approaches rather than disciplinary measures, better outcomes are achieved for both students and classroom relationships. Mohamed Farais et al. (2025) established that while disciplinary action can deter tardiness, excessive reprimand may worsen students' emotional stress, and that a more constructive approach combining communication, parental support, and positive reinforcement could yield more sustainable results. The same study identified teachers and parents as critical participants in addressing the problem through effective supervision, care, and positive support — underscoring the value of proactive engagement over punitive responses (Mohamed Farais et al., 2025). Similarly, Asebias et al. (2025) found that a structured positive reinforcement strategy — built on tangible incentives and consistent teacher engagement — led to a marked

decrease in student tardiness, with sustained improvements even after the withdrawal of external rewards, suggesting that supportive teacher strategies can foster students' intrinsic motivation and self-regulation. These findings strongly support the present study's observation that teachers who maintain open communication and a supportive rapport with tardy students, rather than responding with distance or withdrawal, are more effective in addressing the issue and sustaining a productive classroom environment.

Establishing clear expectations and consistent classroom rules on punctuality from the start of the school year

Several teachers emphasized that setting unambiguous expectations from the very beginning of class is critical in preventing and managing tardiness.

"expectations on punctuality are set clearly, consistent routines are established, and tardiness is addressed through private conversations" (IDI-P1)

"managing student tardiness begins with setting clear expectations from the start and consistently implementing class rules" (IDI-P2)

Wilkins et al. (2023) found that students report a stronger sense of connectedness when teachers provide clear and consistent behavioral expectations in the classroom, sticking to established rules and responding promptly when students act out. Chow et al. (2024) similarly affirmed that a focused classroom environment with clear behavioral expectations provides a secure setting in which students can manage their own conduct and engage more productively in learning. Together, these findings support the present study's position that establishing unambiguous expectations on punctuality from the very start of the school year — and consistently implementing them — is a critical preventive strategy for reducing student tardiness.

Using reward systems and positive reinforcement to encourage punctual behavior

Complementing punitive measures, several teachers also integrated positive reinforcement strategies to encourage punctual behavior.

"reminders and positive reinforcement for students who arrive on time" (IDI-P2)

"providing recognition or small incentives for students who consistently arrive punctually, while assigning reasonable responsibilities" (IDI-P15)

Asebias et al. (2025) conducted a single-subject case study at Pasig Catholic College finding that a structured positive reinforcement strategy using tangible incentives produced a marked decrease in tardiness among Grade 11 students, with improvements sustained even after the withdrawal of external rewards — indicating potential for habit internalization beyond simple compliance. Similarly, Montederamos (2024) found that a lottery-based Strategic Reward System significantly reduced tardiness among Grade 12 students, recommending that schools adopt structured reward systems as part of their behavior management policy to foster a culture of punctuality and enhance student engagement. These findings directly support the present study's theme of using positive reinforcement — through recognition, reminders, and small incentives — as a practical complement to punitive measures in encouraging consistent punctual behavior among students.

Conducting private, one-on-one conversations with chronically late students to understand underlying causes

A prominent coping strategy among teachers is conducting private, individualized conversations with students who are persistently tardy.

"practice of speaking with students individually after class or during a suitable break, calmly reminding them of the importance of punctuality and probing for any underlying challenges contributing to their tardiness" (IDI-P8)

"the importance of addressing tardiness briefly and privately rather than calling attention to it publicly during the lesson" (IDI-P7)

Kearney et al. (2023) established that school attendance problems — including tardiness — intersect significantly with student-teacher relations, with absenteeism and lateness inversely associated with positive school climate variables such as personal connectedness and supportive student-teacher relationships. Research further confirms that the lack of emotional and academic support from teachers is a contributing factor to school attendance problems, and that early identification and intervention are crucial to preventing these issues from escalating into more serious and prolonged patterns of avoidance and absenteeism. These findings directly support the present study's approach of conducting private, individualized conversations with chronically late students — probing for underlying challenges in a calm and non-punitive manner — as a structured, relational support strategy that addresses the root causes of tardiness before they worsen.

Involving parents and guardians in addressing persistent tardiness through communication and conferences

When individual conversations prove insufficient, teachers escalated their interventions to include the family.

"reprimanding students with noticeable tardiness patterns and calling the attention of their parents, in addition to reminding both students and families of the school's rules and regulations" (IDI-P10)

"conducting parent or guardian conferences to clearly discuss the student's tardiness and its consequences, describing this approach as establishing shared accountability between the school and the home — a strategy that proved most effective in addressing persistent tardiness." (IDI-P11)

Lasky-Fink et al. (2021) conducted a large-scale randomized experiment with over 131,000 families, finding that modified truancy notifications sent to parents — using simplified language, emphasizing parental efficacy, and highlighting the incremental negative effects of absences — reduced student absences by an estimated 40% over standard, punitively worded notifications. The study further established that intervening to correct parents' mistaken beliefs about their children's attendance behaviors is a powerful lever for improvement, affirming that proactive parent communication is far more effective than reactive or punitive approaches. These findings directly support the present study's strategy of involving parents through conferences and direct communication when persistent tardiness is observed — establishing shared accountability between school and home before problems escalate further.

Implementing a 'quiet/silent entry routine' where late students enter without interrupting the ongoing lesson

A widely employed strategy among participants is the establishment of a designated quiet entry routine for students arriving late.

“late students enter without interruption, consult posted instructions on the board, and self-direct their activity, thereby minimizing disruption to the ongoing lesson flow” (IDI-P1)

“consistent entry routine wherein late students quietly enter, check a designated area for missed instructions, and begin work immediately without interrupting the class” (IDI-P7)

“late-entry routine in which students quietly join the class, follow a posted activity, and catch up independently” (IDI-P13)

Kraft and Monti-Nussbaum (2021) found that a typical classroom is interrupted over 2,000 times per year, resulting in the loss of between 10 and 20 days of instructional time, with student tardiness identified as a significant contributor — as late arrivals frequently required teachers to stop whole-class instruction to orient the student to the current task. The study recommended that schools create a culture that prioritizes instructional time and directly address the challenges posed by student tardiness as part of broader efforts to protect the integrity of classroom learning. These findings directly support the present study's strategy of implementing a quiet entry routine — wherein late students enter without interruption, consult posted instructions, and self-direct their activity — as a practical and evidence-aligned approach to minimizing disruption to ongoing lesson flow.

Continuing the lesson uninterrupted and addressing the late student after class using nonverbal cues during entry

Several teachers also reported relying on nonverbal communication and deliberate restraint as tools for managing late entry.

“practice of making brief eye contact and gesturing for the late student to take a seat while maintaining the lesson without interruption, addressing the behavior only after class” (IDI-P8)

“time spent addressing late students during class is kept to a minimum, with post-class conversations serving as the preferred intervention point” (IDI-P3)

Karasova and Nehyba (2023) conducted a systematic review finding that student-centered communication strategies in classroom behavior management — including non-directive, non-judgmental responses — foster a supportive and respectful classroom environment with increased student engagement and decreased problem behaviors, actively involving students in their own behavioral regulation. Their subsequent study further emphasized that the effectiveness of classroom management depends not only on what is communicated but also on how it is conveyed — whether through student-centered or teacher-directed approaches — with student-centered responses proving to embody more thoughtful, responsive strategies that produce more positive behavioral outcomes. These findings directly support the present study's strategy of addressing tardiness through brief nonverbal cues during entry — such as a glance or gesture — while reserving verbal correction for post-class conversations, thereby managing late arrivals in a dignified, non-confrontational manner that protects both instructional continuity and classroom climate.

Clear, Consistent, and Unified Tardiness Policies

Several participants directly called for the strengthening of implementation structures. As stated by:

"Strengthen the implementation of the rules and everyone should be using the same policies." (IDI-P3)

"Follow religiously the handbook on how to deal Tardiness." (IDI-P4)

"Strengthen the policy and implement. Handbook must be released to every student." (IDI-P5)

Gano et al. (2024) emphasized that institutional policies and their consistent implementation play a critical role in shaping student punctuality, noting that the need for clear, unified tardiness policies has been raised by stakeholders, teachers' groups, and parents alike, yet these perspectives are often expressed in varying and contradictory ways — underscoring the urgency for a unified approach. The study further stressed that consistent attendance is embedded in schools' overall philosophies, as regular and punctual attendance is the only means by which pupils can advance intellectually at a successful rate, and ultimately called for a comprehensive collaboration among educators, administrators, and parents to promote a culture of punctuality across all levels. This directly supports the present study's assertion that tardiness policies must be uniformly enforced by all teachers, with the student handbook functioning as a shared operational framework across all classrooms and grade levels.

Redesigning the Tardiness Policy for Fairness and Support

Participants articulated their vision for a redesigned policy as follows:

"The policy should include clear guidelines, progressive interventions, and consideration of students' circumstances, while also ensuring accountability." (IDI-P1)

"If I could revise the policy, I would prioritize clarity, consistency, and fairness. There should be clear consequences for repeated tardiness, but also flexibility for valid reasons." (IDI-P7)

"I'm good with the school's tardiness policy but add specific sanctions. Like community service before going to class, students are no longer allowed to enter class if they are 15 minutes late." (IDI-P3)

Montederamos (2024) found that a structured, incentive-based Strategic Reward System (SRS) significantly reduced tardiness among Grade 12 students, recommending its school-wide adoption as part of a behavior management policy that encourages punctuality through positive engagement rather than purely punitive measures. Supporting this, Gano et al. (2024) affirmed that clear expectations, consistent enforcement, and proactive interventions are essential components of an effective attendance management strategy. Together, these studies reinforce the present study's thrust of redesigning tardiness policies to be firm yet humane — incorporating graduated consequences, supportive mechanisms like counseling, and sensitivity to valid student circumstances.

Coordinated Effort Among All Stakeholders

Many participants used language that explicitly acknowledged the shared responsibility of administrators, teachers, and parents in addressing student tardiness. They framed the issue not as a classroom management problem alone, but as an institutional challenge requiring alignment among all parties. Recommendations ranged from clearer communication channels to formal coordination protocols. The notion of a "unified effort" was frequently invoked, signaling that the participants see fragmented, siloed responses as part of the problem itself.

"Overall, a coordinated effort from all stakeholders is key to effectively reducing student tardiness." (IDI-P2)

"I recommend clear and consistent policies, better communication with parents, and coordinated support from teachers and administrators to address the root causes early." (IDI-P6)

"A unified effort from all stakeholders is key to effectively reducing student tardiness." (IDI-P11)

Warne et al. (2020) found that student tardiness is fundamentally a sign of shortcomings in school organization, concluding that institutions must develop clear, predictable guidelines for handling late arrival — ones rooted not only in consistent enforcement but in promoting students' sense of belonging and motivation. This is reinforced by the broader literature affirming that collaboration between educators, parents, and stakeholders is crucial for developing holistic approaches that address the underlying causes of tardiness. Together, these findings support the present study's position that reducing tardiness demands a coordinated, unified effort among all stakeholders — administrators, teachers, and parents — rather than fragmented, siloed institutional responses.

Institutionalizing School-Community and Parent Partnerships

The teachers also stressed the importance of class advisers taking initiative in informing parents at the earliest sign of habitual tardiness, rather than waiting for situations to escalate.

"Discipline starts at home. School is a second home. Communication build a strong partnership. It is very important to connect and communicate." (IDI-P4)

"Strong teacher and parent cooperation will surely help in correcting the current routine of the student. Because I believe that it will really start from home." (IDI-P10)

"Strengthen the implementation of the rules and everyone should be using the same policies." (IDI-P3L3)

Jabar (2023) found that parental involvement among Filipino parents in low-income public schools is generally low, concluding that schools must proactively create structured avenues for parent engagement rather than competing for attention parents cannot easily give. Research further establishes that regular, two-sided communication between parents and teachers — grounded in trust and shared expectations — is essential for effective home-school collaboration and proven beneficial for students' academic and social development. These findings directly support the present study's call to institutionalize school-community partnerships through formal mechanisms such as parent-teacher conferences, orientation sessions, and early communication of habitual tardiness before situations escalate.

Parents as Primary Agents of Routine and Discipline

Nearly all participants identified parental behavior as either the root cause or the primary solution to tardiness. They emphasized that children's sleeping habits, morning preparation, and departure time from home are entirely within the domain of parental authority and responsibility. When parents fail to enforce these routines, students arrive at school late regardless of how strict school policies are.

"As a teacher, parents should help by building routines at home that encourage punctuality." (IDI-P15)

"Parents and the home environment play an important role in student tardiness because they help manage students' morning routine and time before school." (IDI-P9)

"Parents and home life play a big role in student tardiness because they help set morning routines, sleep habits, and time management." (IDI-P13)

Moldero et al. (2024) identified that student tardiness is driven by family-related factors such as low parental involvement, household responsibilities, and home conflicts, further noting that in younger students, tardiness is more dependent on parental responsibility — affirming that children's punctuality is fundamentally governed by what happens within the home before school begins. Teachers and parents are consistently identified as critical participants in resolving student lateness, necessitating a comprehensive and cooperative approach that integrates parental participation alongside behavioral interventions and school-level strategies. Together, these findings directly support the present study's position that parental behavior is both a root cause of and primary solution to tardiness, making the home environment an indispensable site of intervention regardless of how strict school policies are.

Parental Monitoring and Involvement in Student Performance

Teachers recommended that parents regularly communicate with teachers and class advisers, not just during scheduled conferences but on an ongoing basis. Parental involvement was framed not only as a corrective measure but as a motivational force — students whose parents take an active interest in their school performance are more likely to be disciplined and punctual.

"Habits such as sleeping time, morning routines, and time management are primarily developed at home. In many cases, students who are frequently late are influenced by lack of supervision." (IDI-P11L41)

"Parents should always monitor their children and support them so that students feel motivated to go to school." (IDI-P12L42)

"Parents and the home environment play a big role in student punctuality because they influence routines, discipline, and time management habits." (IDI-P2)

Rickert and Skinner (2022) found through a longitudinal growth curve analysis that warm involvement from parents and teachers uniquely and positively predicted initial levels and changes in students' academic engagement across multiple grade levels, establishing that parental involvement functions as a consistent developmental force in shaping students' motivation and school behavior. The study further confirmed that both parents and teachers are crucial to the development of academic engagement during late childhood and early adolescence, and that students who experience high-quality parental involvement tend to reciprocate with greater engagement — creating a virtuous cycle of involvement and motivation. These findings directly support the present study's theme that parental monitoring and active interest in children's school performance serve not only as a corrective measure for tardiness but as a motivational force — students whose parents remain engaged are more likely to be disciplined, punctual, and invested in their own schooling.

CONCLUSION

Through in-depth interviews with Junior High School teachers, a comprehensive data analysis has revealed insightful findings regarding their experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and recommendations towards student tardiness in Davao Central College. Regarding the experiences, three major themes surfaced: Tardiness as a Disruptive Force in the Classroom, Recognizable Patterns in Tardiness Occurrence, and Teacher

Management Strategies and Interventions, encapsulated by six core ideas: interrupted lesson momentum, missed instructional content, peak tardiness during morning classes and post-break transitions, identifiably chronic offenders, consistent rule enforcement and teacher modeling, and dialogic and referral-based interventions. Concerning the challenges, three themes emerged — Disruption of Instructional Flow and Classroom Management, Academic Performance and Learning Gaps, and Teacher Management Strategies and Interventions — with six core ideas reflecting forced lesson repetition, wasted instructional time, knowledge gaps, missed assessments, eroded trust, and sustained teacher rapport despite persistent lateness. In terms of coping mechanisms, three themes were identified: Proactive Rule-Setting and Enforcement of Accountability, Individualized Student Engagement and Pastoral Support, and Non-Disruptive Classroom Routines for Late Entry Management, illustrated by strategies ranging from clear expectation-setting and positive reinforcement to private student conferences, parental involvement, silent entry routines, and nonverbal classroom management. Finally, regarding recommendations, three themes surfaced — Policy Strengthening and Consistent Enforcement, Coordinated Effort and Stakeholder Collaboration, and Home Environment and Parental Role in Punctuality — emphasizing unified policies, multi-stakeholder coordination, and enhanced parental monitoring. In summary, while teachers have demonstrated resilience through individualized and relational strategies, the overall effectiveness of tardiness management remains constrained by inconsistent enforcement, limited parental cooperation, and the absence of unified institutional policies, making coordinated school-wide and home-based interventions essential for fostering a sustained culture of punctuality at Davao Central College.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to address student tardiness among Junior High School students at Davao Central College. For the school, establishing a clear, unified, and consistently enforced tardiness policy across all grade levels is essential, complemented by structured support mechanisms such as guidance counseling services and designated quiet entry protocols to minimize classroom disruption while addressing the root causes of chronic lateness. To the security guards, enforcing punctual campus entry, maintaining accurate records of late arrivals, and monitoring students during transition periods — particularly before first period and after breaks — are critical measures to discourage loitering and support timely class attendance. For educators, integrating punctuality as a core classroom value through clear rules, positive reinforcement, consistent modeling, private dialogues with chronically late students, and open parental communication can significantly reduce tardiness occurrences. To the administrators, strengthening coordination among teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and community partners is essential to developing a holistic response to tardiness, alongside redesigning existing policies to incorporate graduated consequences and supportive measures that are firm yet fair. To the parents and guardians, active involvement in establishing consistent morning routines, monitoring school attendance, and maintaining regular communication with teachers and class advisers is strongly encouraged, as punctuality fundamentally begins within the home environment. Lastly, future researchers are encouraged to explore the long-term effects of tardiness intervention programs, conduct comparative studies across different school contexts, and investigate the effectiveness of technology-based attendance monitoring systems and community-based approaches. These recommendations aim to foster a more disciplined and supportive learning environment by addressing enforcement gaps, strengthening home-school partnerships, and promoting a sustained culture of punctuality at Davao Central College.

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