

Parent Engagement in Childhood Education: Real-World Experiences and Difficulties throughout the Academic Year: A Phenomenological Study

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.91200142>

Received: 11 December 2025; Accepted: 18 December 2025; Published: 03 January 2026

ABSTRACT

This research employed a qualitative, phenomenological design to explore the real-world experiences and challenges faced by parents in their children's education throughout the academic year in Arpili Elementary School in Balamban, Cebu Province, for Academic Year 2025-2026. This aimed to comprehend the complex elements of how parents' involvement and engagement connect with their children's educational journey, as well as provide a rigorous analysis of how different dimensions of parental engagement influence student outcomes. There were ten (10) participants in this study. They were all parents and or guardians – respondents, of children in early childhood education and will be subject to an in-depth interview or a detailed survey, depending on availability and preference. All respondents were selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was intentional in selecting participants based on their ability to provide diverse and informative themes, concepts, or phenomena. Often known as a judgmental or expert sample, a purposive sample is best known to be a non-probability sample. Its main objective was to generate a sample that could reasonably be believed to be true to the public. Based on the findings emphasized the restrictions such as tight work schedules, financial constraints, and technological gaps that frequently limit their participation. Despite these obstacles, they have still endeavored to stay engaged. The study also found that schooling thrives when parents, teachers, and the school acknowledge their shared responsibility and mutual partnership. In conclusion, parent engagement required collaborative effort for it to be effective and sustainable not only for the parents, teachers, and schools but also for the children. By transitioning from individual struggles to collaborative partnerships, parental engagement can become more impactful in influencing a child's overall success.

Keywords— Discipline, Geography of Environment Variables Investigated, Research Design, Qualitative Research Method, Cebu Province

INTRODUCTION

Parental engagement in childhood education is acknowledged as essential for students' success, schools and families encounter ongoing difficulties during the school year. Philippine context parental involvement refers to the amount of participation a parent has when it comes to the schooling of his/her children. Some schools foster healthy parental involvement, but sometimes parents hesitate if they will involve themselves with their children's education. It has been advocated in Western countries.

However, there is a body of literature that examined the significance of social and cultural influences and the effects of parents' involvement in and expectations of their children's development and learning. It is important for schools to recognize the existence of cultural variations in parent involvement because there are differences among parents with diverse backgrounds on when, why, and how they are involved in their children's education. Filipino mothers' and fathers' cultural values, namely individualism, collectivism and conformity values; are associated with parental warmth, rules/limit-setting and expectations of family obligations; and child internalizing and externalizing behaviors. Liane Peña Alampay (2024)

In the *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022* for 15-year-old learners, the Philippines ranked 77th out of 81 participating countries. Filipino students scored well below the OECD average in mathematics, reading, and science. These results suggest that Philippine students lag behind many of their global peers in core academic competencies. (Chi, 2023) The Philippines' educational ranking, being a third-world country, is complex and remains weak, lagging among neighboring Asian countries and the entire world in general. One of the fundamental human rights is access to quality education, especially for the younger learners. Hence, we look to better understand the potential reasons and drivers of the country's position, and one way to do that is to examine a child's progress from the moment they start going to school, setting them up for a better educational trajectory.

For a long time, Child education is a crucial aspect in shaping the character and quality of human resources in the future. Parents play a crucial role in supporting the process of their children's education, both within and outside the school environment. This research aims to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the use of social media by parents and the extent to which it can enhance their involvement in child education. Sunarso, B. & Mahardhani, AJ (2024).

In the Philippines, parents get sharply involved in many ways, Bronfenbrenner's bioecological perspective on human development is an ideal framework for understanding how individuals negotiate the dynamic environment and their own identities in international and intercultural education settings. However, a review of the current literature shows that most studies either adopted the earlier version of the theory (i.e., the ecological systems theory) or inadequately presented the most recent developments of the bioecological model (i.e., the process-person-context-time model). (Bronfenbrenner, 2024)

A child's academic achievement, motivation, behavior, and overall well-being are all impacted by consistent parental engagement, which has long been acknowledged as a critical component of educational development.

A large body of research has highlighted the advantages of parental involvement in their child's academic success. However, the lived experiences of parents who not only juggle work and other needs at home while consistently staying involved in their child's educational achievement have received less attention. In-depth, human-centered research is necessary to fully comprehend the real-world experiences that parents encounter, particularly the emotional, practical, and structural challenges they face.

To better understand how parents interpret their engagement efforts throughout the academic year — from the thrill of back-to-school activities to mid-year exhaustion, to the end-of-year assessments — this study employed a phenomenological method. This study will analyze how parents view their responsibilities, their internal and external struggles, and other variables that affect their engagement, and how these views ultimately change throughout the academic year.

Parental participation has a big impact on how pupils learn in the Philippines, where education is seen as an essential instrument for upward mobility. The Brigada Eskwela and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) are two examples of the policies and initiatives the Department of Education (DepEd) has put in place to promote active parental participation. Despite these initiatives, Filipino parents still encounter several obstacles when it comes to consistently being involved in their kids' education. Parents are often unable to fully support their children's academic journeys due to a lack of formal education, tight work schedules, and limited financial resources.

The researcher, as a family man with three kids, wanted to spend and engage as much as possible in his children's school affairs. This gives him the chance to be able to connect not only with his children but also with other parents in the school and community. However, just like any other parent, the researcher also encounters challenges along the way that sometimes make him question if he's doing enough to be a present father to his growing children.

Moreover, the shift in educational modalities has further highlighted the challenges and disparities in parental involvement. The transition to online and modular learning required parents to assume the role of facilitators, which posed difficulties for those with limited technological literacy or those juggling multiple responsibilities.

These lived experiences underscore the need for a deeper understanding of the barriers and enablers of parental involvement in the Philippine education system.

The effect of parental involvement on children's health behavior, particularly regarding physical activity and nutrition—two key factors in preventing them from becoming overweight—is not well understood, and other correlations, such as with academic achievement, are limited.

This study aims to explore the lived experiences of Filipino parents as they engage with their children's education across the academic year.

This research is, therefore, very significant.

Theories and Legal Bases

According to researchers, it is driven primarily by Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory (2024) and supported by Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement (2024). Parental involvement is widely recognized as a critical factor in enhancing the academic performance of students, particularly in the competitive educational landscape. In various ways, the implications for second language learning and teaching of a sociocultural theory of mind Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (2024), and the Theory of Planned Behavior. This study looks at the lived experiences of parents, including challenges of staying engaged in their child's academic progress. This is also supported by the Phenomenological Approach, The Theory of Reasoned Action Jaap Sok, Joao Rossi Borges, Peter Schmidt, Icek Ajzen (2021), the Theory of Change, and Social Capital Theory.

Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory is a framework developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1989). The Bioecological Model, which helps us understand how various interconnected systems in their environment, as well as the developmental processes an individual experiences over time, affect and influence a child's development. This theory represents Bronfenbrenner's dynamic view of the developmental processes. It is central to understanding parent engagement, positing that multiple layers of environmental systems influence a child's development. While the mesosystem—the relationships between the family and the school—is essential to reaffirming educational principles, the microsystem—the family and the school—has a direct impact on students' learning.

Parental engagement occurs predominantly inside the microsystem and mesosystem, where interactions between home and school have a significant impact on the child's learning outcomes. The ecosystem, which includes government initiatives and workplace regulations, has a big influence on parental involvement in the Philippines, where extended families are crucial to raising children.

Based on this theory, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders within the community should maintain a good level of communication to ensure that a child's development of the ecological system is strengthened. Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement (1990) was first developed in the early 1990s by Joyce Epstein and outlines the different types of involvement in a given community. This also helps us understand and enhance parental engagement in education, as it views relationships among schools, families, and communities as interconnected domains that influence a child's development.

This theory and model identify six types of involvement: Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision-making, and Community Collaboration. This framework serves as the foundation for many education policies and school practices that encourage broadparental engagement.

The importance of mutually beneficial partnerships between families and schools is emphasized by this approach, which also stresses the multifaceted character of parental engagement. It also serves as a prism through which to examine the varied forms and intensities of engagement in diverse home and school contexts. This concept is especially pertinent in the Philippines since it supports the Department of Education's (DepEd) efforts to encourage cooperation between the home and the school.

Research by Epstein (1990) and Bronfenbrenner (2024) supports the idea that consistent parental engagement and involvement positively impact academic performance, social behavior, and motivation. However, limited local studies explore the nuanced experiences of Filipino parents across an academic year.

The Republic Act No. 10533, also known as the **“An Act Enhancing the Philippines Basic Education System by Strengthening its Curriculum and Increasing the Number of Years for Basic Education, Appropriating Funds therefor and for other Purposes.”** It was signed into law on May 15, 2013, by the late President Benigno S. Aquino III. The law institutionalized the K to 12 Basic Education Program, which adds two years of Senior High School (Grades 11 and 12). This law enhanced the curriculum and extended it from ten years to 13 years, which is broken down to one year of Kindergarten, six years of Elementary, four years of Junior High School, and two years in Senior High School.

The key provisions of the law included:

Expanded Basic Education Cycle, which structures the basic education to include a total of 13 years, including one year in kindergarten and two years of senior high school.

Mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE), which requires instruction in kindergarten and the first three years of elementary education, shall be delivered in the learner’s native language. On the other hand, the Filipino and English language instructions are gradually introduced in Grade 4 onward. This aims to develop comprehension and cognitive development.

In Curriculum Development, formulating a learner-centered and developmentally appropriate curriculum is tasked to the Department of Education (DepEd). The curriculum is intended to be research-based, relevant, and responsive. It also emphasizes the significance of culturally appropriate learning.

This Republic Act represents and marks a fundamental shift in the Philippine educational scene. The extension of the education cycle ensures that children are offered a more comprehensive education that prepares them for the real world and its complexities. This law strives to sustain the Philippine educational system’s efficacy and quality through continuous teacher training and organized monitoring mechanism. Overall, R.A. No. 10533 establishes the groundwork for an inclusive and globally competitive education system in the Philippines.

Department of Education Order No. 13, s. 2023, this circular establishes and creates the National Learning Recovery Program to address learning losses caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. This order offers structured treatments and interventions such as classroom-based reading and literacy support, intervention camps, and consolidation. This emphasizes and highlights teacher-collaboration, learner-centered activities to ensure Filipino students recover and build necessary skills for future learning.

The law also requires training teachers properly for the new curriculum, as well as collaborating with industry partners and private institutions to ensure alignment with global education standards. This law also supports learner-based and research-based curricula.

DepEd Order No. 13, s. 2013 is an important and key policy for rehabilitation and recovery from pandemic-related disruptions in education brought about by COVID-19. This presents an aligned and comprehensive curriculum that helps restore and improve student learning, which is supported by rigorous curriculum standards and reinforced by specific interventions.

The article from Time entitled “The Philippines Still Hasn’t Fully Reopened Its Schools Because of COVID-19. What Is This Doing to Children?” talks about the extended school closures, the longest pandemic-related closure globally. The school closures severely impacted over 27 million public school students.

The article also talked about the struggles students go through with remote learning. It was a lot more difficult for students in the countryside as some would have to walk far in order to get a good phone service to connect with teachers. Aware of the struggles, the Department of Education introduced a remote learning mix which included online platforms, TV, and radio lessons on top of printed modules. However, this has brought further concerns, including the lack of internet access, and personal devices to connect.

About 12% of families were also forced to purchase devices - usually smartphones, which cost around \$172 per device, as statistics showed that over 40% of students did not have any device they could use. The 10% of students were also able to borrow, while the other 27% were using the device they already own.

The article pointed out and painted a grim picture that prolonged school closure in the Philippines would result in an education crisis with much more implications in the rural, low-income communities and pupils. Remote learning, while it is better than nothing during the pandemic, has somehow contributed to the gap due to the problems mentioned above. An immediate and inclusive solution and methods are necessary to rescue children's learning.

In the Article entitled "Exploring Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education in Philippines: A Case Study" which was authored by *Melissa Bartolome* of Philippine Normal University and *Nordin bin Mamat* of University Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia, as published on *The Normal Lights* in 2020 the researcher underscored the importance of strong parental involvement and highlighted the necessary policies that offer clear guidelines and enhance engagement of students and stakeholders in school.

The researcher also found four major themes that emerged in the data which included:

Meaningful Home-School Interaction as an effective and mutually beneficial communication between parents and school.

Collective In-School Engagement, which highlights parents participating together with teachers and school administration in school-sanctioned activities.

Structured At-Home Learning ensures that education doesn't just end in the classroom and that parents also organize and facilitate engaging learning routines at home.

Refining Stakeholders' Capacity by ensuring continuous education and improvement that help enhance the skills and capabilities of not just the teachers and school stakeholders, but also the parents for a meaningful engagement.

This study fills and addresses the stakeholders' lack of insight on parental engagement in early childhood education. It also emphasizes the significance of well-defined policies to encourage Filipino parents to engage in school. More importantly, this sets as a foundation for further study and lays the groundwork for cross-regional research that could capture a wide range of perspectives.

In the study conducted by Harry Palmes (2023) entitled "Parental Involvement on the Modular Distance Learning in Challenged Area: A Case Study" the author had highlighted the different forms of Parental Involvement, Challenges Encountered, and Strategies used by Parents to get engaged. The study stresses and emphasizes that parents are central and critical to the success of Modular Distance Learning, especially in challenged areas. Although parents were resilient during this transition, the lack of knowledge, resources, and in some cases training, had hampered their efficacy. In order to assist, teachers and schools must strengthen communication and provide clear instructional materials, as well as establish a community-based support system to aid parents in fulfilling their critical role.

This research provides insights to educators and policymakers on the realities that Filipino parents in rural areas face. This also puts emphasis on how important parent and teacher training is, as well as communication techniques to improve modular learning implementation. This recognizes parents as the frontline in their children's education during the pandemic.

Michelle C. Amparo (2021) conducted a study entitled "Parental Involvement in Brigada Eskwela and School Performance", which examined how parents' participation in Brigada Eskwela, which is DepEd's and community-led initiative for school maintenance and school performance. The researcher employed a descriptive-correlational methodology with her 104 respondents and found that there is active participation among parents in many aspects of Brigada Eskwela.

The researcher recommended that principals should involve and include parents in the planning, development, and implementation of Brigada Eskwela efforts. The researcher also encouraged continuing to actively participate in school efforts and activities that will not only support the school's maintenance but also extend to the enhancement of students' benefits.

The research demonstrated that structured initiatives from the Department of Education, the community, as well as school-based initiatives can improve not only the physical conditions of the school but also the overall student learning and school effectiveness, especially in low-resource settings and communities.

In the study created by Jabar, Dizon, & colleagues (2023) entitled "Child- related factors and parental involvement among parents in select public elementary and high schools in the Philippines". The article explored how family capital - skills, time, resources and family support influences parental engagement. It highlighted and emphasized how family capital, encompassing socioeconomic status, educational background, and emotional capacity, influences parents' participation in their children's education. Parental engagement and participation are defined not just by attending school-mandated events, but also in family-initiated settings.

By focusing on both parent and child perspectives, the study provides a comprehensive picture of what defines meaningful involvement from a family's perspective. It emphasizes emotional barriers such as limited time or educational understanding as well as financial resources, which affect how a family engages. This understanding is crucial for developing policies and programs that really promote family engagement, especially in settings where resources vary greatly.

In the study conducted by Bartolome, Mamat, & Masnan (2020) about "Exploring Kindergarten Teachers' Perspectives in Parental Involvement in the Philippines" they examined how kindergarten teachers in the Philippines perceive parental engagement. They have conducted interviews with teachers and other stakeholders and arrived at four key themes, which included:

Meaningful home-school communication is defined as an ongoing two-way communication between teachers and parents that involves purposeful interactions about their child and how they can help.

Collective in-school engagement which encourages parents to actively and proactively join school-mandated events.

Structured at-home learning support so parents can provide guided educational support at home. Refining teachers' capacity reinforces how parents and teachers can effectively collaborate in planning and developing involvement programs. More importantly, the study emphasizes a holistic view of engagement on both home and school fronts. It also implies the need to refine teachers' capacity to make sure they not only teach children but also collaborate with parents and other stakeholders, as it's critical in professional development. As this study is focused on kindergartens, this sets the tone and provides critical insights for early intervention as family engagement has more impact on a child's development trajectory.

The study centers on kindergarten teachers, which provides a perspective of a frontline agent, as this study demonstrates how educators' experiences affect parental engagement rather than being viewed as pure parental responsibility. This also serves as a blueprint for policy and practice that can provide a consistent foundation.

The Philippine education system has been struggling for a very long time when it comes to producing and providing quality education to its population. This is felt more in the far-flung areas that are out of reach of government services. In connection, parents of these children are challenged to provide and even engage in their children's education. Here are some, to name a few:

Financial Constraints. Arguably, the most significant hindrance for parents to get involved and engage in their child's academic progress. This rings true to thousands, if not millions, of people in the underprivileged and underdeveloped areas. Many families, regardless of status, struggle to meet the rising cost of sending children to school. Admission Fees, school supplies, uniforms, books, et cetera are just Education is never free, regardless of the government assistance that people get.

Time Management and Busy Schedules. This is one of the significant barriers that parents face throughout the school year. Parents juggle demanding work schedules, family, other responsibilities, and commitments. Since most of the school activities happen during office hours as well, a significant number of parents don't get to see or get involved in the curricular activities of their child. This impacts their engagement at school, affecting not just their children but also the parents themselves, who may feel isolated and resentful.

Teacher-Parent Communication. Consistent communication between teachers and parents is important to track the progress and difficulties of children throughout the school year. Without proper and timely communication, progress updates may fall into cracks, which could then lead to potential fallout. Difficulty in maintaining constant communication could hinder the overall learning experience.

Socioeconomic Disparities. Families on the low-income side of the spectrum tend to feel the significant impact of these disparities. Limited resources, not just financially, but also in time, educational requirements, and even a parent's educational attainment, could greatly affect how they access information, affecting a child's progress.

In conclusion, employing theories along with methodologies provides a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences and challenges of parents in the academic year. Examining the lived experiences and difficulties Filipino parents encounter during the school year requires an understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of parental engagement. Teachers and politicians in the Philippines can create inclusive tactics that encourage meaningful parental participation by utilizing important theoretical views. This would ultimately improve student learning results and fortify ties between the school and the community.

Significance of the Study

This study shed light on the vital role parental engagement plays in early childhood education, as well as the challenges faced by parents in their engagement throughout the academic year. Most existing literature focuses on measurable outcomes of parental involvement, but little is known about the emotional, logistical, and systemic challenges that parents face while trying to stay engaged in their children's learning, especially in lower-income or high-workload households. The research aimed to provide a thorough picture of how parental participation grows over time and under different conditions by investigating both good and negative experiences. The results of this research could be beneficial for parents and families, educators and the school, policymakers and administrators, the Department of Education, the researcher, learners and future researchers.

Objectives of the Study

Statement of the Problem

This research determined the difficulties and real-life experiences that Filipino parents have when it comes to being involved in their kids' education at Apili, Balamban, Cebu Province, during Academic Year 2025-2026, as basis for a phenomenal study.

Particularly, it answered the following queries:

1. How do Filipino parents describe their involvement in their children's education across the academic year?
2. What challenges do parents encounter in supporting their children's learning at home and in school?
3. What strategies do parents use to overcome barriers to their children's educational engagement?
4. Based on the findings, what implications for practice can be drawn to strengthen support systems for parental involvement in education?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section helped both the researcher and the readers to evaluate the study's overall validity and dependability. This part provided information about Research Design, Environment, Respondents, Data Gathering Technique, and analysis.

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological methodology to examine and comprehend the lived experiences of parents as they engage with their children's education for an academic year. The phenomenological approach was used to gain in-depth insights, and the challenges parents encounter throughout the school year. The ultimate objective of this research was the positive impact of parental involvement on academic achievement was revealed.

However, it was unclear how parental involvement in sports contributes to sports performance and academic achievement. In this study, our main questions were about the differences in academic achievement, in participation in sports activity, and in sports results among pupils of parents involved or not involved in sports and education. Klára Kovács kovacs.klara@arts.unideb.hu · Ádám József Oláh · Gabrie Ila Puszta (2024).

In educational settings, educators' individual perceptions of theories and concepts (e.g. about teaching and learning) were crucial for their professional performance. Thus, regarding education for sustainable development (ESD), it was vital to focus on teacher educators' (TEs') perceptions of this concept. As ESD is a comparatively young and dynamic field of research, not all academic lecturers are familiar with it. A Goller, J Markert (2025)

This research particularly utilized the Phenomenological Approach in Qualitative Study: Data Collection and Saturation, explore the phenomenological study method, data collection procedures and analysis, followed by how and in which position the saturation is achieved. Md. Shamim Hossain, Md. Kausar Alam, Md. Sobhan Ali (2024). The subject matter investigated in this research was parental engagement in education as explained, experienced, and perceived by the parents. This research adhered to the transcendental phenomenological principles that The coordination problem a challenge for transcendental phenomenology of science Harald A. Wiltsche (2025). The nature of awareness, the detachment of researcher bias through epoché, and the methodical process of data reduction and thematic analysis to reveal the elements of lived experience are all highlighted by transcendental phenomenology.

Environment

The study was conducted in Arpili Daycare Center in Barangay Arpili in the Municipality of Balamban. The barangay is located 7 kilometers from the heart of the Municipality of Balamban.

According to the 2020 census, Barangay Arpili had a population of 6,977, making up 7.33% of the total population of Balamban. Among this population, the age group between 14 years old and below, or the dependent population, which includes infants/babies, and children in their elementary years, makes up an aggregate of 36.15% of the total population.

The reason why this locality was chosen is that the researcher has been a resident of this Barangay and Municipality for seven years now, after moving from Cebu City and Lapu-Lapu City, where he grew up. This also allows him to better understand and relate to the dynamics and challenges of his co-parents in Barangay Arpili, being that he's also a parent of school children in the early childhood education.

Respondents

There was a total of ten (10) participants in this study. They were all parents and or guardians of children in early childhood education and will be subject to an in-depth interview or a detailed survey, depending on availability and preference. All respondents were selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is intentional in selecting participants based on their ability to provide diverse and informative themes, concepts, or phenomena. Often known as a judgmental or expert sample, a purposive sample is best known to be a non-probability sample. Its main objective was to generate a sample that could reasonably be believed to be true to the general public.

Inclusion criteria. To be included in the study, the participants must be residents of Barangay Arpili in the Municipality of Balamban who have a child/children in early childhood education, and they agree to sign the consent form.

Exclusion criteria. Those who withdraw during the course of the study will be excluded. In identifying the participants, the researcher asked help and assistance from the school and the adviser of the students. Once identified, they were contacted through chat or call. The researcher then introduced himself and informed the parents about the research, he sent them an electronic copy of the consent form where they can signify their willingness to participate in the study or not. The form contained information about the research, including the nature of the study, how it will be done, and reassured them about data safeguards in place to protect their information and identity.

The survey form was sent to them via email or chat so they can answer them at a convenient time for them to make sure it doesn't disturb their daily lives.

Since the research sought to understand the lived experiences from the perspectives of the participants, the researcher understood how important it is to select a sample where they could learn more; hence, the key participants in this study were the parents or guardians of children in the early childhood education who went to Arpili Daycare Center.

Instrument

The primary source of data and information were the key respondents' narratives, gathered through a detailed survey and an in-depth interview. The narratives of the respondents who have gone through a certain experience gathered using a Phenomenological study. The researcher utilized a survey questionnaire that was made and prepared by the researcher, which was used as the study's instrument. The researcher asked for assistance from the school management and class adviser to identify certain individuals who met the criteria and could provide detailed information that helped this study. More importantly, these respondents were willing to fill out and answered the survey to the best of their knowledge.

The researcher translated their answers from Bisaya to English. From the respondents' answers and responses to the survey, the data were gathered and analyzed. The questions stipulated in the survey will be based on the purpose of the study. All responses from the participants were collected and recorded through the answer sheets provided to them.

This study provided a detailed information about the challenges parents go through in the academic year of an early childhood student. This included excerpts from the respondents' answers and experiences. The researcher provided a detailed but brief introduction about the study and its purpose in the hopes that it will put the respondents at ease, to improve their responses and understanding of the study.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher sought approval of the study from the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of Cebu Technological University and the Dean of the Graduate studies. The researcher then looked for participants who met the criteria outlined in the inclusion and exclusion criteria and was contacted by the researcher via chat or phone call.

The participants were provided a copy of the Informed Consent Form (ICF). Once they acknowledge and accept their participation through the ICF, the survey questionnaire was sent to them via chat or email or printout copy. The responses were analyzed and interpreted before it got documented.

The data collection process followed a structured sequence composed of three key phases: pre-data gathering, data gathering, and post-data gathering. Each step implemented with consideration for accuracy, voluntary participation, and respondent confidentiality.

In-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face with selected participants to capture their lived experiences in detail. Prior to each session, informed consent was obtained, ensuring participants understood the purpose of the study and their rights, including confidentiality and voluntary participation. Each interview lasted approximately [45–60 minutes] and was guided by a semi-structured interview protocol to allow flexibility while maintaining focus on the research objectives.

With participants' permission, the entire interview was audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and completeness of the data. Field notes were also taken to document non-verbal cues and contextual observations. After the interviews, recordings were transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity of participants' responses. These transcripts served as the primary data for thematic analysis.

For participants who were unable to attend face-to-face interviews, structured surveys containing open-ended and close-ended questions were distributed through the survey was designed to capture their perspectives on parent engagement and related challenges throughout the academic year. Respondents were given adequate time to complete the questionnaire at their convenience.

Upon submission, all responses were documented and securely stored. Open-ended answers were transcribed verbatim to maintain authenticity, while close-ended responses were organized for thematic analysis. This approach ensured that the voices of participants who could not participate in interviews were represented in the study.

Statistical Treatment

The researcher followed and used Colaizzi's data analysis which was a technique used to better understand and explain the lived experiences in descriptive phenomenology. The distinct seven-step process of Colaizzi's analysis provides a thorough analysis. The ultimate result was clear yet comprehensive recollection of the lived experiences of parents that were validated by the participants. The following steps were done to represent Colaizzi's method for phenomenological analysis.

First of all, the survey answers of the participants were recorded and reviewed. A total of 10 questions for the survey were read, reviewed, and investigated to establish a framework of meanings that helped in summarizing the data in the survey in a broad sense. This aided the researcher in familiarizing the data gathered. From the gathered data, appropriate statements were formulated that relate to and have an immediate relationship to the study. The statements were grouped and thoroughly analyzed to ensure all themes were identified to remain connected to the phenomenon experienced, reflexively "bracketing" was used.

Afterward, significant statements from the participants' responses in the survey were formulated to identify meanings. The established meanings were organized into recurring themes that indicate a particular meaning to create a unique concept.

The findings of the study were merged into an extensive description of the phenomenon being studied. Once done, the researcher created a concise the thorough and simple phrases that suggest meanings that are considered to be significant and fundamental to the phenomena.

Lastly, the participants requested to validate the results by comparing the researchers' descriptive findings to their own experiences and challenges. Upon verification, the results were evaluated to identify elements that may have potentially been overlooked, which may turn out to be relevant as well as aided in modifying and improving the main structure as well as ensure trustworthiness, accuracy, and credibility of the study.

Ethical Consideration

To uphold the highest standards of ethical research, this study ensures fairness, transparency, and integrity throughout its design and implementation. Special care is taken to protect the rights, dignity, and well-being of all participants. The selection of respondents follows ethical protocols, and all necessary precautions are implemented to avoid coercion, misrepresentation, data fabrication, and any form of harm.

This research adheres to institutional ethical standards and national policies, including the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). Prior to data collection, the research protocol is submitted to and reviewed by the institution's Ethics Review Committee to verify its alignment with accepted ethical principles. Participation in the study is voluntary, and respondents are required to provide informed consent before completing the questionnaire. The informed consent form clearly outlines the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and the participants' right to withdraw at any stage without consequence.

RESULTS

This section presents the qualitative results related to the parent engagement in childhood education: real-world experiences and difficulties throughout the academic year – a phenomenological study. Parental involvement is seen as a fundamental element of successful childhood education. It is associated with better academic performance, attendance rates, social-emotional growth, and student satisfaction across various contexts, while also improving communication, trust, and alignment between home and school.

However, engagement is not constant or the same across circumstances; it varies throughout the academic year as families manage work obligations, school schedules, socio-economic limitations, and changing needs of their children.

This literature review synthesizes theoretical and empirical research on parent engagement, delineates the conceptual landscape for a phenomenological exploration of lived experiences and challenges, and identifies gaps that this study addresses:

- (a) the intra-year dynamics of engagement, and
- (b) the nuanced first- person accounts of parents as they navigate school rhythms, policies, and practices.

CONCLUSIONS

This research parent engagement in childhood education: real-world experiences and difficulties throughout the academic year – a phenomenological study at Arpili Daycare Centre in Barangay Arpili in the Municipality of Balamban Cebu Province for School Year 2025-2026, as basis for Thematic Analysis Table.

There were 10 respondents composing of parents or guardians of day care students. Gathering of data was made possible by using face to face interview. Data were analyzed using Qualitative Method of research.

After given the approval to conduct this research by the barangay and teachers of day care center at Arpili Daycare Centre in Barangay Arpili in the Municipality of Balamban Cebu Province, the researcher face to face interview. The researcher gave the respondent-groups an overview about this undertaking as well as the benefit it could provide to the students, teachers, and school. This was followed by interviews related to the study with the respondent-groups.

FINDINGS

A total of 10 respondents composing of parents or guardians of day care students were utilized in this research. Parents or guardians were chosen through random selection.

The following themes have emerged from participants' narratives:

Theme 1: From Homework to Heart work

A strong involvement in a child's school and academics from parents are valuable. More importantly, kids, especially in the early childhood education, requires emotional and moral guidance as well as values formation, and involvement in extracurricular activities both in school and at home.

Four of the eight participants have revealed that they get involved in their children's school activities. Their primary involvement revolves in regularly checking their child's assignments and reviewers for exams (R1), as well as make sure they provide materials for projects and guide their child (R4). One respondent also says that they give moral support and motivate their child to do their best (R8). These responses highlight how external and internal factors, such as attending PTA meetings, helping their kids with assignments and reviewers, influence their child's education greatly. It's a blend of academic assistance and emotional connection. This reflects a comprehensive strategy that gives a holistic approach that enhances both learning and development of the child's character.

Theme 2: The Juggle is Real

It's clear that parents, regardless of background, wants to get involved in their child's academic progress. However, it is evident that their realities present heavy constraints. The mixture of personal and financial duties limits their amount of time and energy they can devote in school-related activities. Time constraints like long and inconsistent work hours makes it difficult for a lot of parents engage in school-mandated events, school updates, and attend meetings. According to (R1), limited time because of long workhours hinder them to engage in school related affairs.

On the other hand, (R2) said school expenses from school supplies to the accompanying fees for most extracurricular activities, on top of the existing costs of running a household itself not only burden parents but also puts them in a place where they have to choose what they have to prioritize first and in most cases, it's always expenses at home that comes first.

These overlapping constraints demonstrates that parental-engagement is determined by the capacity of parents rather than a matter of choice. The findings underscored that parents lessened involvement does not equate to them not caring. Instead, it illustrates a bigger systemic hurdle that the school must address. The message is clear - parents wants to get involved but schools must meet them halfway and accommodate.

Theme 3: Cheers and Tears in Heaven

Children's responses to parental engagement vary depending on their parent's engagement style, their developmental stage, and their character. While many children thrive on encouragement, there are other children who view parental involvement as overstepping into their own personal space. According to (R1), "she becomes more motivated when I help." This is when he helps her daughter with their schoolwork. Another response from (R3) said that their son "feels proud when I attend school events". This entails that showing up does matter to children as parental presence both at home and in school is a sign of support. Other children don't receive parental engagement the same way. According to the response from (R2), his child "sometimes gets annoyed, especially when I get strict" and (R6) said their child "feels pressured at times but appreciates it." when they get involved. This shows that engagement can sometimes be construed by children as being strict which then leads to frustration and resistance. The kid's interpretation and response to parental-engagement is mixed - some appreciates it and feels proud while others see it as their parents controlling them.

The duality of gratitude paired with pressure reveals a situation where parents have to tread carefully to maintain balance. When done correctly, parental- engagement could be a tremendous motivator that can boost children's confidence and sense of worth. However, given the diverse responses of children, it's important for parents to maintain balance and sensitivity. Encouragement over control and respecting the child's autonomy with tailored engagement. In the end, the "cheers" represent the advantages and benefits of warmth and encouragement, whilst "tears" warns parents against potentially mistaking involvement to pressure.

Theme 4: It takes two to Edu.

Parents view the role they play in their child's education as essential and complementary to the school's mission. Their engagement doesn't end in academic assistance but more importantly, parents set and establish

discipline, values, and good habits kids can bring through their lifetime. Parents are the first teachers. According to R1, "I am my child's first and most important teacher."

While R3 said "My role is to install discipline and good study habits." Parents understand and recognize their role in instilling attitudes and values even before they go to formal school. Moral and disciplinary guidance emphasizes discipline and character development as key components of academic instruction, which, according to R8 "I see myself as the foundation for my child's future success.". On the other hand, some parents have a partnership mentality where they see themselves as a co-educator and works hand in hand with teachers. According to R4, "I act as a partner to teachers in guiding my child."

This emphasizes that education, whether in early childhood or in the later part of a child's academic progress, is a shared responsibility. Neither parents nor school can achieve this alone. Genuine learning could occur when both the school and parents work together with mutual respect. It's important that both parties are willing to coordinate which means, parents must be willing to help, and school must build procedures and systems that could encourage and sustain long-term engagement.

Theme 5: Help us Help Them

Parental engagement is not a solo effort - it literally takes a village to raise a child let alone be able to engage in their academics. It requires an ecosystem of support from parents, schools, community, and even the local government. Parents certainly want to get engaged in their child's education, but they lack institutional support from the local government, school, and the community - which makes participation difficult. According to R1, "Flexible meeting schedules for working parents" would greatly help in their participation as they don't have to choose between making a living and attending school-mandated activities and meetings. Also, R3 highlighted that there should be "Better coordination between school and parents" while R8 said a "Community Support like parent study groups" could also go a long way.

This shows that flexibility, coordination and communication, as well as community-based support greatly aids in a child's education. Parents, schools, and community should work together because in essence, helping parents' benefits children and by extension, strengthens the entire educational community.

Implications

The findings of this phenomenological study show the diverse realities of what parents go through as they stay engaged in their child's early education. Parents show genuine interest in being involved but their engagement is often hurdled by competing duties, resource restrictions, and quality of home-school partnerships. These findings have significant implications among different stakeholders.

Schools should provide and offer varied opportunities for engagement possibilities for parents to accommodate parents' personal schedules and personal circumstances. They should also strengthen as well as provide a clear and consistent communication channel to foster trust and avoid misunderstandings among school, teachers, and parents. In-line with this, parents, being recognized as co-educators at home, should maintain a respectful and foster a collaborative relationship with teachers.

On the other hand, policy makers together with the school, should prioritize and allocate resources that will aid parents to be more engaged in their child's education. This could be in a form of resource provision that will assist in creating a support community or learning centres as well as free internet access and computers that parents can use at no cost to them to stay connected. More importantly, the policy makers should provide training programs and professional development for teachers to help them engage empathetically and inclusively with parents - especially those that face hurdles. Peer-support group as well as communities from Non-Government Organizations and private corporations can provide mentorship that promote shared-learning as well as give resources in the form of psychosocial services to parents. Lastly, for parents, they should aim to have an active and balanced engagement. It would also help a lot if parents can connect with other parents to help reduce isolation and share stories and workarounds from other parents. They should also be allowed to be

candid with teachers and the school about their struggles and complaints while the school reassures, they are responsive and inclusive.

This study has shown us that parental engagement is a collaborative effort among schools, teachers, parents, and community. Recognizing the parents lived experiences are vital for the engagement to be meaningful, sustainable, and collaborative. This also shifts the narratives away from blaming disengagement to lack of interest towards real-world challenges that demand collective solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance parental engagement in early childhood education at Arpili Daycare Center.

The school and teachers should adopt flexible and inclusive strategies for parental involvement to accommodate parents' time and work constraints. Clear, consistent communication and guidance on balanced parental engagement are recommended to strengthen home–school partnerships and support children's academic and emotional development.

Parents are encouraged to maintain active yet balanced involvement in their children's education, emphasizing encouragement, values formation, and open communication with teachers. Building peer connections with other parents may also help address shared challenges and reduce isolation.

The community and local government units should provide support mechanisms such as community-based learning initiatives and basic educational resources to help parents participate more effectively in their children's education. Collaboration with external organizations may further strengthen these efforts.

Policy makers and education stakeholders should recognize parental engagement as a shared responsibility and support programs that promote inclusive family–school partnerships, including teacher training on effective parent engagement.

Future researchers may expand the scope of this study by including more participants and additional stakeholder perspectives to deepen understanding of parental engagement in early childhood education.

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