Challenges of Family-School Communication at Zibo Zhangdian District No. 5 Middle School, Zibo City, China

Yu Hui and Jesse Balinas

Graduate School, Angeles University Foundation, Las Pinas City, Metro Manila, Philippines

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the challenges of family-school communication at Zibo Zhangdian District No. 5 Middle School in Zibo City, China. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the research sought to identify the barriers to effective communication between parents and teachers. The study specifically aimed to describe the challenges faced by parents in communicating with teachers, the difficulties teachers encounter when interacting with parents, and to propose an intervention plan to improve these communication practices. The analysis revealed that a significant barrier is the perceived lack of teacher responsiveness, contributing to feelings of disempowerment among parents. Additionally, the lack of timely and detailed communication highlighted the need to bridge communication gaps and offer more opportunities for open dialogue. Misalignment between digital communication preferences and parents' ability to navigate these tools further exacerbated the issue. The study also found that communication challenges were influenced by socio-cultural norms and expectations, making clear, timely, and reciprocal communication vital for student success. The findings emphasized the need for a balanced, inclusive, and strategic approach to family-school communication, where both teachers and parents share responsibility in addressing students' needs.

Keywords*: Families, Middles School, Challenges of Family-School Communication*

INTRODUCTION

Effective communication between families and schools is a cornerstone of student success, particularly in rural middle schools with unique challenges and opportunities. According to Newberg and Waldman (2012), "communication fosters collaboration and mutual understanding, facilitating a supportive educational environment that benefits students, parents, and educators alike." Accordingly, "strategies for compassionate communication—such as expressing appreciation, speaking warmly, and listening deeply—build trust and positive relationships, which are foundational for effective collaboration" (Epstein J. (2009). This study aims to investigate the current state of communication between families and schools in rural middle schools, with focus on parental involvement, communication methods, barriers to effective communication, and coping mechanisms employed to overcome these barriers.

Parental involvement is widely recognized as a critical factor in student achievement. Qian and Yang (2001) highlight that when parents engage in their children's education, students exhibit higher academic performance, better behavior, and increased motivation. This involvement includes a range of activities, from helping with homework to participating in school events and decision-making processes. In rural settings, however, the nature and extent of parental involvement can be influenced by factors such as geographic isolation, socioeconomic status, and cultural norms (Li et al., 2007). Understanding how these factors impact parental engagement is essential for developing strategies to enhance family-school partnerships in rural areas.

The methods of communication between families and schools vary widely and can significantly impact the effectiveness of their interactions. Traditional methods such as face-to-face meetings and phone calls remain

prevalent, but digital communication tools, including emails, school apps, and social media, are increasingly being utilized (Zhang, 2008). Each method has its advantages and challenges. For example, while digital communication can facilitate quick and convenient interactions, it may also exclude families without reliable internet access or technological proficiency (Chen & Li, 2013). This study will quantify the use of different communication methods in rural middle schools and assess their effectiveness in engaging parents.

Despite the best efforts of schools and families, several barriers can impede effective communication. These barriers include logistical issues like time constraints and transportation difficulties, as well as more complex challenges such as language differences, cultural misunderstandings, and limited access to communication technologies (Wang & Lafaele, 2011). In rural areas, these barriers are often exacerbated by greater distances between homes and schools and lack of resources (Huang, 2016). Identifying and quantifying these barriers is crucial for developing targeted interventions to improve communication and parental involvement.

Coping mechanisms and strategies to overcome communication barriers are vital for fostering effective family-school partnerships. Schools may employ various strategies such as flexible meeting schedules, translation services, and the use of multiple communication channels to reach all families (Liu, 2018). Additionally, training programs for teachers on cultural competency and effective communication techniques can help bridge gaps between families and schools (Gao & Zhao, 2019). By examining the current state of communication and the strategies employed to address barriers, this study aims to provide actionable recommendations to enhance family-school interactions in rural middle schools.

Understanding the dynamics of family-school communication in rural middle schools is essential for promoting student success. By focusing on parental involvement, communication methods, barriers, and coping mechanisms, this study seeks to offer a comprehensive overview of the current situation and propose effective countermeasures to improve communication and collaboration between families and schools in rural areas.

Zibo Zhangdian District No. 5 Middle School, Zhangdian District, Zibo City, exemplifies the unique challenges and opportunities faced by rural middle schools in China. The school serves a diverse student population, many of whom come from families with varying levels of socioeconomic status and educational backgrounds. Situated in a rural area, Chengbei Middle School is influenced by the broader social and economic conditions of Zibo City, where agriculture remains a predominant industry and many families rely on farming for their livelihood.

In rural areas like Zhangdian District, effective communication between families and schools is critical for fostering student success. However, several factors complicate this process. Geographic isolation can limit the frequency and quality of interactions between parents and teachers. Parents may face significant travel distances to attend school meetings or events, and many lack access to reliable transportation. Additionally, the economic constraints of rural families often mean that parents have limited time to engage with the school due to work commitments.

Furthermore, the digital divide poses a significant barrier to effective communication. While urban areas in China have rapidly adopted digital communication technologies, rural regions like Zhangdian District often lag behind. Families may have limited access to the internet or lack the necessary devices to participate in digital communication such as smartphones or computers. This digital divide can prevent effective use of emails, school applications, and other online platforms that facilitate parent-teacher communication.

Cultural factors also play a role in shaping family-school interactions. Traditional attitudes towards education and parental involvement may vary, with some parents viewing education as primarily the responsibility of the school. Language barriers can also hinder communication, especially for families who speak local dialects that differ significantly from the Mandarin Chinese typically used in educational settings. These cultural and linguistic differences can lead to misunderstandings and reduced engagement between families and schools.

Despite these challenges, Zibo Zhangdian District No. 5 Middle School has implemented various strategies to enhance communication with families. Teachers and school administrators have explored multiple communication methods, ranging from traditional face-to-face meetings and phone calls, to the limited use of

digital tools when possible. Recognizing the importance of parental involvement, the school has made concerted efforts to engage parents through regular updates, community events, and parent-teacher meetings.

However, the effectiveness of these efforts and the extent of parental involvement remain areas of concern. Preliminary observations suggest that while some parents are highly engaged, others are less involved, possibly due to the aforementioned barriers. Identifying these barriers and developing effective coping mechanisms is essential for improving communication and ensuring that all students receive the support they need to succeed academically.

Given this context, the study aims to provide a detailed examination of the current state of communication between families and Zibo Zhangdian District No. 5 Middle School. By focusing on the methods of communication, the level of parental involvement, the barriers to effective communication, and the coping mechanisms employed, this research seeks to offer insights and recommendations that can enhance family-school partnerships not only at Zibo Zhangdian District No. 5 Middle School but also in similar rural middle schools across China. More specifically, the aim of the study was to explore the challenges of family-school communication at Zibo Zhangdian District No. 5 Middle School, Zibo City, China. Specifically, the study described the challenges encountered by parents in communicating with teachers; describe the challenges encountered by teacher in communication with parents; and provided an intervention plan to enhance parents and teachers communication.

METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative research design to gain a deep understanding of the population's characteristics and relationships. This approach involved collecting rich, detailed data from a sample of individuals through interviews. These method allowed an exploration of participants' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions related to the phenomenon under investigation.

Data collection was centered on gathering qualitative insights into the phenomenon of family school communication. This enabled the researchers to delve into various aspects of the phenomenon by capturing participants' narratives, views, and experiences. The analysis involved thematic coding and interpretation to uncover underlying themes, patterns, and relationships within the qualitative data. The study was conducted at Zibo Zhangdian District No. 5 Middle School, located in the Zhangdian District of Zibo City, Shandong Province, China. This locale is characterized by its unique socio-economic and educational environment which makes it an ideal setting for exploring the dynamics of family-school communication. Zibo City is situated in the central part of Shandong Province, a significant cultural and economic region in eastern China. The participants are parents and teachers of students from different grade levels (Grades 7 to 9). There were three (3) participants for teachers and three (3) for parents.

The study mainly utilized the interview method. The researchers developed an interview guide, a survey of current conditions. For a more in-depth understanding of the narratives of the participants, manual analysis of the data was made through familiarization with Data, Coding, to manageable units, developing themes, then finally, data interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study is presented through a discussion on the challenges of family-school communication at Zibo Zhangdian District No. 5 Middle School, Zibo City, China. The proposed intervention plan is derived from the data, addressing identified gaps to enhance the communication processes between parents and teachers. Through this exploration, the study may contribute to fostering a collaborative environment that supports student success and holistic development.

Challenges Encountered by Parents in Communicating with Teachers

Three key themes emerged the challenges encountered by parents in communicating with teachers: the perceived lack of teacher responsiveness, misalignment of communication expectations, and limited opportunities for open dialogue.

Table 1: Themes on the Challenges Encountered by Parents in Communicating with Teachers

Theme	Quoted Statements	Code (Occurrences)	Participant
Perceived Lack of Teacher Responsiveness	*"I send messages but often wait days for a reply, and by then, the issue feels less important."*	Reply (5)	Parent-Participant 1
	"When I contact the teacher, I often get no response until the next day or later."		Parent-Participant 2
	"I always reach out first. I wish the teacher would contact me if something is wrong."	Contacting teachers (3)	Parent-Participant 3
	"Even when the teacher replies, the answers are vague, like 'doing fine' or 'needs improvement.'"		Parent-Participant 1
Misalignment of Communication Expectations	*"The school expects us to use the app, but I'm not tech-savvy and might miss updates."*	App Usage (3)	Parent-Participant 3
	"I prefer face-to-face talks to understand the teacher's tone, but messages feel cold."		Parent-Participant 2
	"The app has too many notifications, and I miss important messages."	App Guidance (3)	Parent-Participant 1
	"There's no guidance on how to use the app. I'm unsure about how to message the teacher."		Parent-Participant 3
Limited Opportunities for Open Dialogue	*"The meetings are rushed, and I don't have time to ask my questions."*	Meetings (3)	Parent-Participant 2
	"Teachers should check in regularly, even if there are no issues."		Parent-Participant 1
	"I have insights about my child, but there's no way to share them with the teacher."	Regular Updates (2)	Parent-Participant 3
	"We only have one or two meetings a year, and by then, issues might be too late to fix."		Parent-Participant 2

Perceived Lack of Teacher Responsiveness

One of the most significant challenges expressed by parents was the feeling that teachers were often unresponsive or slow to acknowledge their concerns. This lack of responsiveness left parents feeling dismissed and disempowered in their attempts to address their children's needs. Parent-Participant 1 described her frustration with delayed replies, stating: "*I sometimes send messages to the teacher, but it takes days to get a reply. By then, the issue feels less relevant, and I start to wonder if my concerns are even important to them.*" This prolonged silence, according to the participant, made her hesitant to reach out in the future, fearing that her efforts might again go unnoticed.

For other parents, the limited availability of teachers outside work hours compounded this frustration. Parent-Participant 2 explained, "*When I finally gather the courage to contact the teacher after work, I often get no response until the next day—or sometimes later. It's hard because I need answers quickly to address issues at*

home." This delay, while understandable given teachers' workloads, inadvertently conveyed a lack of urgency or interest in the parents' concerns. The lack of teacher-initiated communication was another sore point for parents. Parent-Participant 3 shared: *"I feel like I'm always the one reaching out. If there's something wrong with my child at school, I'd like to hear about it directly from the teacher, but most of the time, I only find out when I ask."*

Such experiences left parents feeling excluded from critical aspects of their child's educational journey. Furthermore, when communication did occur, it sometimes lacked clarity or depth. Parent-Participant 1 recalled: "*Even when the teacher replies, the answers are often very brief. I ask specific questions about my child's progress, but I only get vague responses like 'doing fine' or 'needs improvement.' It's not enough to understand what's really going on."* This lack of detailed feedback hindered parents' ability to address issues effectively at home.

Misalignment of Communication Expectations

Another theme that emerged was the misalignment between how parents and teachers preferred to communicate. While schools increasingly rely on digital platforms, not all parents feel comfortable or equipped to use these tools effectively. Parent-Participant 3 expressed her difficulties with technology, stating, "*The school expects us to use the app for everything, but it's not easy for me. I'm not good with technology, and I worry I might miss important updates or messages."* This over-reliance on digital platforms excluded parents who lacked the necessary skills or access to these tools, creating a digital divide within the parent community. For some parents, the use of digital communication felt impersonal. Parent-Participant 2 explained, "*I prefer face-to-face conversations where I can really understand the teacher's tone and body language. When everything is done through messages, it feels cold and disconnected."* This preference highlights the importance of offering multiple communication channels to accommodate diverse needs and preferences.

The format of digital communication also posed challenges. Parent-Participant 1 shared: "*The app sends so many notifications, it's hard to keep track of what's important. Sometimes I miss messages because they get buried under less relevant updates*." Such experiences underscore the need for clear and streamlined communication protocols to ensure critical information reaches parents effectively. Moreover, the lack of clarity on how and when to use these digital tools added to the confusion. Parent-Participant 3 noted, "*There's no guidance on how to communicate with the teacher through the app. Should I send a short message or a detailed one? I'm never sure, and it makes me hesitant to reach out."* This uncertainty further widened the gap between parents' expectations and the school's communication practices.

Limited Opportunities for Open Dialogue

Parents also expressed a desire for more meaningful and in-depth conversations with teachers, which they felt were lacking in both formal and informal settings. This limitation often left parents feeling unheard and disconnected from their child's academic experience. Parent-Participant 2 reflected on her experience during parent-teacher conferences, stating, *"These meetings are so rushed. I barely have time to ask questions before the teacher moves on to the next parent. I leave feeling like I didn't get the answers I was looking for."* This rushed nature of interactions prevented parents from fully engaging in discussions about their child's progress. Similarly, Parent-Participant 1 highlighted the need for more proactive communication from teachers, sharing, "*It's not enough to wait for scheduled meetings. Teachers should reach out regularly to discuss how the child is doing, even if there are no major issues. It shows that they care*." This proactive approach, according to the participant, would foster a stronger sense of partnership between parents and teachers.

Another concern was the lack of opportunities for parents to voice their perspectives. Parent-Participant 3 noted, "*Sometimes I have insights about my child that the teacher might not know, but there's no platform for me to share this. I feel like my input isn't valued*." This absence of reciprocal dialogue hindered the collaborative potential of the parent-teacher relationship. Additionally, the limited frequency of communication added to the sense of disconnect. Parent-Participant 2 explained, "*We only have these formal meetings once or twice a year. A lot can happen in between, and by the time we meet again, some issues are*

already too late to address." Such infrequent interactions left parents feeling out of touch with their child's school life.

The findings illustrate the multifaceted challenges parents face in communicating with teachers at Zibo Zhangdian District No. 5 Middle School. From unresponsiveness and misaligned expectations to the lack of open dialogue, these challenges highlight the need for schools to re-evaluate their communication practices. Establishing clear, inclusive, and proactive communication strategies can bridge these gaps, fostering a stronger partnership between parents and teachers and ultimately enhancing students' educational experiences.

The theme of "Perceived Lack of Teacher Responsiveness" highlights a major barrier to effective parent-teacher communication, as expressed by several parents. A common sentiment shared by parents was frustration over delayed or inadequate responses from teachers, which created feelings of disempowerment and exclusion. Parent-Participant 1's account of waiting days for a reply exemplifies the emotional toll that delayed responses can have, leading to a sense that their concerns were not prioritized. Such experiences align with Zhao (2017), who stresses the importance of addressing communication gaps in educational contexts. Zhao's work points out the need for strategies that improve the responsiveness and involvement of parents, which is central to the findings here.

In the context of modern education, teachers' response times are pivotal to ensuring that parents feel heard and involved in their child's learning. The delayed responses and the perception that parents must always initiate contact, as noted by Parent-Participant 3, directly contradict the principles of proactive communication championed by Chen (2018) and Liu (2019). These scholars argue that teacher-initiated communication plays a crucial role in fostering stronger relationships between schools and families, a sentiment echoed by parents who expressed their desire for teachers to take the first step in sharing updates about students' progress.

Moreover, the concern about limited availability outside of work hours, as mentioned by Parent-Participant 2, exacerbates the problem, reinforcing the need for more flexible communication channels. Gao (2018) calls for continuous assessments of communication practices to identify barriers and improve engagement. These findings suggest that schools may need to reconsider how they allocate time for communication with parents, taking into account the realities of busy work schedules and varying levels of digital literacy.

Furthermore, the parents' accounts of receiving vague or insufficient feedback, such as "doing fine" or "needs improvement," further highlight a gap in the depth of communication. This lack of detailed information left parents unable to effectively address issues at home, aligning with Liu and Yang's (2007) suggestion that structured communication frameworks are essential for improving educational outcomes. The lack of clarity underscores the necessity for teachers to provide more specific, actionable feedback that enables parents to support their child's development at home.

Another prominent issue was the misalignment between teachers' preferred communication methods and parents' comfort with these methods. As the literature on family-school communication points out, the rise of digital platforms has introduced both advantages and challenges (Xu et al., 2009). While these tools offer greater convenience and accessibility, they can alienate parents who are not technologically proficient. Parent-Participant 3's difficulty with using an app reflects the digital divide noted by Huang and Peng (2002), emphasizing the importance of offering multiple communication channels to accommodate parents' diverse preferences.

In addition, the overwhelming nature of notifications from digital platforms, as experienced by Parent-Participant 1, speaks to the need for schools to streamline their communication practices. As Liu and Yang (2007) suggest, clear guidelines for when and how to use communication tools can mitigate confusion and ensure that essential information is not lost in a sea of less important updates. Finally, the lack of opportunities for meaningful, in-depth conversations between parents and teachers emerged as another critical challenge. The rushed nature of parent-teacher meetings, where parents feel they don't have enough time to address their concerns, further diminishes the quality of communication. This reflects Xu et al.'s (2009) assertion that family-school communication is a multifaceted domain that requires ample time and space for productive interactions. Parents' desire for more proactive communication from teachers, as expressed by Parent-

Participant 1, suggests that regular, informal check-ins could foster a stronger sense of partnership and build trust between parents and teachers. This aligns with Huang and Peng's (2002) recommendation that schools must invest in creating robust partnerships to facilitate better communication and improve student outcomes.

Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Communication with Parents

The thematic reflection on the challenges faced by the teachers in communicating with the parents include Lack of Parental Engagement, Over-reliance on Digital Communication Platforms, Misalignment of Expectations, and Emotional and Behavioral Challenges

Table 2: Themes on the Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Communicating with Parents

Theme	Quoted Statements	Code (Occurrences)	Participant
Lack of Parental Engagement	*"I try to send regular updates to parents about their child's performance, but it's difficult to get a response. Often, I feel like I'm just sending messages into the void."*	Response (3)	Teacher-Participant 1
	"Even when I do hear back, it's often very late, and by then, the issue has either resolved itself or become less relevant."	Reactive Contact (3)	Teacher-Participant 2
	"Parents often don't reach out until something major happens, which makes it harder for me to address issues before they escalate."		Teacher-Participant 3
Over-reliance on Digital Communication Platforms	*"We rely heavily on the school app for communication, but it lacks the personal touch of face-to-face conversations. Sometimes I feel like we're missing the emotional connection."*	Impersonal Communication (3)	Teacher-Participant 1
	"I send messages through the app, but I never really know if parents are fully understanding the message. There's no opportunity for immediate feedback."	Uncertainty (3)	Teacher-Participant 2
	"The app is useful, but I often feel like it's a one-way street. I send out updates, but I don't always hear back unless I follow up multiple times."	One-way Communication (3)	Teacher-Participant 3
Misalignment of Expectations	*"Some parents expect me to update them constantly, while others only contact me when something goes wrong. It's hard to strike a balance."*		Teacher-Participant 1
	"Parents sometimes expect immediate responses, but that's not always realistic given my workload. Managing their expectations is a constant challenge."	Expectation Management (3)	Teacher-Participant 2
	"I've had parents ask me for updates on their child every week. I understand their concern, but it's challenging to provide detailed reports that often unless there's a significant issue."	Regular Updates (3)	Teacher-Participant 3

Emotional and Behavioral Challenges	*"Talking about a child's behavior problems with their parents can be really difficult. Sometimes, parents get defensive or upset, and it makes the conversation harder."*	Defensive Reactions (3)	Teacher-Participant 1
	"Some parents don't want to hear that their child is struggling. They become upset, which makes it hard to have a calm, constructive conversation."	Emotional Response (3)	Teacher-Participant 2
	"It's tough when a parent becomes emotional or angry about their child's performance. I have to tread carefully, and it often takes longer to resolve the situation."	Conversation (3)	Teacher-Participant 3

Lack of Parental Engagement

A significant challenge expressed by teachers is the lack of consistent and meaningful engagement from parents in the communication process. Teachers feel that their efforts to reach out to parents are often met with little response or delayed feedback, which affects the ability to work collaboratively on addressing student needs.

Teachers commonly encounter difficulty in receiving timely responses from parents, which is critical in order to address student issues promptly. Teacher-Participant 1 emphasized this issue: *"I try to send regular updates to parents about their child's performance, but it's difficult to get a response. Often, I feel like I'm just sending messages into the void."* This highlights the frustration of teachers when their communication efforts seem futile. For teachers to support students effectively, ongoing interaction with parents is essential, but without reciprocal engagement, this becomes challenging. Teachers often feel isolated in their efforts and uncertain whether parents are receiving or reading the updates provided. Without feedback, it's difficult to gauge whether the information shared is helpful or understood by the parent.

Teacher-Participant 2 reflected on the issue of delayed communication: *"Even when I do hear back, it's often very late, and by then, the issue has either resolved itself or become less relevant."* This statement underscores a key concern for teachers: the importance of timely communication. By the time a parent responds, the issue may no longer be relevant, thus undermining the effectiveness of the communication. Teachers find themselves playing catch-up, addressing problems that have either already been resolved or have intensified in the interim due to the lack of quick intervention from both parties. Teacher-Participant 3, on the other hand, echoed the feeling of frustration regarding parental engagement: *"Parents often don't reach out until something major happens, which makes it harder for me to address issues before they escalate."* This idea reflects a reactive approach to communication, which is problematic for teachers trying to stay proactive. Teachers prefer to engage with parents before problems escalate, but the lack of proactive engagement from parents leaves teachers in a position where they are addressing issues that could have been prevented or mitigated with earlier communication. This may result in missed opportunities to provide the best support to students and to build stronger relationships with parents.

Over-reliance on Digital Communication Platforms

As schools increasingly adopt digital communication platforms, teachers often face difficulties in using these tools effectively to communicate with parents. While digital tools offer convenience, they sometimes hinder the depth and quality of communication, particularly when it comes to building rapport or addressing complex issues.

Teachers pointed out that while digital platforms such as school apps or messaging systems are meant to facilitate communication, they often create a sense of distance and lack of personal connection. Teacher-Participant 1 stated: *"We rely heavily on the school app for communication, but it lacks the personal touch of face-to-face conversations. Sometimes I feel like we're missing the emotional connection."*

This quote underscore the limitation of digital communication platforms. While they may be quick and efficient for conveying basic information, they cannot replicate the understanding conveyed through face-to-face interaction. The lack of non-verbal cues in digital communication makes it difficult for teachers to gauge the emotional tone of the conversation, and parents may also feel that the communication is too impersonal, which can impede relationship-building.

Teacher-Participant 2 has a similar concern: *"I send messages through the app, but I never really know if parents are fully understanding the message. There's no opportunity for immediate feedback, which makes it hard to gauge their feelings."* Participant 2 discusses the one-way nature of digital communication. Teachers are often left uncertain whether their message has been received, understood, and appreciated. Immediate feedback is necessary for any effective communication strategy, but in a digital context, this is lost. Teachers may need to be sure that parents comprehend the information they are sending, especially when discussing important matters related to their child's performance.

Teacher-Participant 3 avers that th*e "app is useful."* However, he laments that it feels *"like it's a one-way street."* He shares, thus: *"I send out updates, but I don't always hear back unless I follow up multiple times."* This statement reflects the lack of reciprocal communication on digital platforms. Teachers often find themselves sending information without receiving any form of acknowledgment or response, leading to frustration and uncertainty. This communication gap can create a sense of isolation for teachers and reinforce the idea that parents are not engaged in their child's educational journey.

Misalignment of Expectations

Teachers often find themselves caught between varying and sometimes conflicting expectations from parents regarding the frequency, content, and style of communication. This misalignment can lead to frustration and confusion, as teachers attempt to balance the needs and expectations of different parents.

The diversity of parental expectations regarding communication with teachers creates a challenge for educators in trying to meet everyone's needs while also managing their time and workload. Teacher-Participant 1 noted: *"Some parents expect me to update them constantly, while others only contact me when something goes wrong. It's hard to strike a balance."* This remark speaks of the difficulty that teachers face in navigating the wide range of expectations. Some parents may expect frequent, detailed updates about their child's academic progress, while others may only initiate contact when problems arise. Teachers are expected to balance both types of communication, which can be overwhelming when there is no clear understanding of how often or in what form updates should be provided.

Teacher-Participant 2 added:*"Parents sometimes expect immediate responses, but that's not always realistic given my workload. Managing their expectations is a constant challenge."* This is a reflection of the challenge teachers face in balancing the high expectations of parents with their actual capacity to respond. Teachers often deal with a heavy workload, and immediate responses may not always be feasible. The pressure to manage parents' expectations while keeping up with their duties in the classroom is a recurring theme among teachers.

Relatedly another teacher, Teacher-Participant 3, explained: *"I've had parents ask me for updates on their child every week. I understand their concern, but it's challenging to provide detailed reports that often unless there's a significant issue."* This comment highlights how some parents may not fully understand the teacher's workload or the nature of the communication required. Teachers often feel pressured to provide frequent updates even when there is no major issue, which can be both time-consuming and unnecessary. Finding a balance in the frequency and depth of communication is a challenge that requires mutual understanding and respect for each party's limitations.

Emotional and Behavioral Challenges in Communication

Discussing sensitive topics, such as a child's behavioral issues or academic struggles, often results in emotional reactions from parents, which can make the communication process more difficult for teachers. Teachers frequently face emotional challenges when discussing a child's behavior or academic performance, especially when the conversation involves negative feedback. Teacher-Participant 1 remarked: *"Talking about a child's*

behavior problems with their parents can be really difficult. Sometimes, parents get defensive or upset, and it makes the conversation harder." This quote demonstrates the emotional complexity of communication when teachers need to discuss negative issues. Parents often become defensive when confronted with news that their child is struggling, and this emotional reaction can hinder the conversation. Teachers must navigate these sensitive topics carefully to avoid escalating the situation and to maintain a productive, solutions-oriented dialogue.

Teacher-Participant 2 on the other hand observes that *"Some parents don't want to hear that their child is struggling. They become upset, which makes it hard to have a calm, constructive conversation."* This statement illustrates how some parents may react emotionally when confronted with their child's shortcomings. The emotional response can derail the conversation, preventing teachers from providing helpful feedback. This situation requires teachers to be diplomatic and patient in addressing these issues, but it also reflects a challenge in managing parents' emotional states while trying to focus on solutions.

Teacher-Participant 3 expanded on this issue saying that *"It's tough when a parent becomes emotional or angry about their child's performance. I have to tread carefully, and it often takes longer to resolve the situation."* This sentiment reflects the delicate balance teachers must maintain when discussing a child's academic or behavioral problems. Parents' emotional reactions can make it harder to resolve issues efficiently, as teachers must invest more time in calming the parent down and ensuring they understand the situation. These emotionally charged interactions can extend the time it takes to find solutions and can sometimes lead to unresolved conflicts.

The challenges that teachers face in communicating with parents are complex and multifaceted. Lack of parental engagement, over-reliance on digital communication platforms, misalignment of expectations, and emotional responses all play a significant role in hindering effective communication. Teachers need support in managing these challenges to improve communication with parents, ensuring that the focus remains on the best interests of the students. Schools may need to consider providing professional development opportunities to equip teachers with strategies to handle these communication challenges, as well as offering guidance for parents to improve their engagement. By addressing these issues, a stronger partnership between teachers and parents can be established, benefiting the students in the long run.

The lack of consistent and meaningful engagement from parents is a critical challenge highlighted by teachers. While teachers make efforts to communicate with parents, such as sending regular updates and addressing student needs, they often receive delayed or no feedback. This lack of reciprocal engagement creates a sense of frustration and isolation for teachers, who rely on timely input from parents to effectively address student issues. Research by Zhang and Li (2019) emphasizes the importance of clear, ongoing communication between schools and families for student success. However, the challenge remains that many parents do not prioritize or respond to communications, leaving teachers to address issues reactively rather than proactively. When responses from parents are delayed or absent, teachers are often left scrambling to address issues that may have already been resolved or intensified, reducing the effectiveness of their interventions.

As schools increasingly rely on digital platforms to communicate with parents, a significant challenge emerges: the impersonal nature of digital tools. While digital tools offer convenience, they lack the emotional connection and immediacy of face-to-face interactions. Teachers often express frustration that the one-way communication on these platforms leads to uncertainty about whether parents are fully understanding or engaging with the information shared. This aligns with findings from Chen and Wang (2018), who note that while digital communication tools are widely used in Chinese schools, they are not always effective in creating a two-way, interactive conversation. The lack of immediate feedback or emotional cues from parents on these platforms leads to feelings of isolation for teachers, who are uncertain about the effectiveness of their communications. Moreover, without reciprocal communication, teachers are left unsure about whether their messages have been understood or acted upon.

While the use of digital communication tools and attempts to engage parents in student progress are essential components of effective teacher-parent communication, the lack of timely, reciprocal engagement, emotional complexities in discussions, and misalignment of expectations present significant challenges.

Intervention Plan to Enhance Parents and Teachers Communication

The goal of this intervention plan is to address the challenges encountered by both parents and teachers in communicating effectively, fostering a collaborative partnership that enhances students' educational experience. By setting clear goals and implementing targeted strategies, this plan seeks to reduce frustration, foster stronger parent-teacher relationships, and improve student outcomes.

Establishment of Clear Communication Protocols

Objective- To streamline communication channels and set clear expectations to reduce frustration and confusion.

Table 3: Establishing Clear Communication Protocols

Intervention Strategy	Timeline	Method for Monitoring Progress
Create a Communication Guide- Develop a guide outlining communication methods, preferred response times, and digital tools.	2 weeks	Collect feedback from teachers and parents on the clarity and usefulness of the guide. Adjust based on input.
Clarify Digital Tool Usage- Offer workshops for parents on navigating communication apps, especially for those less comfortable with technology.	1 month	Track workshop attendance and gather feedback through surveys to evaluate parent engagement and understanding.
Set Up Regular Communication Schedules- Teachers send weekly updates on student progress.	Continuing	Monitor teacher compliance with weekly updates and evaluate parent feedback on the frequency and relevance of communication.

The table presents an intervention plan focused on improving communication between teachers and parents. The first strategy, "Create a Communication Guide," involves developing a guide that outlines communication methods, preferred response times, and digital tools for effective interaction. This guide will be created within two weeks, and progress will be monitored by gathering feedback from both teachers and parents on its clarity and usefulness, making adjustments based on their input. The second strategy, "Clarify Digital Tool Usage," aims to support parents, particularly those less familiar with technology, by offering workshops to help them navigate communication apps. These workshops will be held over one month, with progress tracked through workshop attendance and post-event surveys to gauge parent engagement and understanding. The third strategy, "Set Up Regular Communication Schedules," encourages teachers to send weekly updates on student progress. This ongoing initiative will be monitored by tracking teacher compliance with the weekly updates and collecting parent feedback on the communication's frequency and relevance, ensuring it aligns with their expectations and needs. Together, these strategies create a comprehensive plan to enhance communication between teachers and parents, fostering a more informed and engaged school community.

Improvement of Responsiveness and Engagement

Objective- To address the perceived lack of teacher responsiveness and foster greater parent involvement in the communication process.

Table 4: Improving Responsiveness and Engagement

Intervention Strategy	Timeline	Method for Monitoring Progress
Response Time Commitment- Teachers acknowledge receipt of messages within 24 hours.	Continuing	Review teacher response time logs and assess parent satisfaction with responsiveness.
Use Multiple Communication Channels- Provide alternatives such as phone calls or face-to-face meetings for more personal interaction.	Continuing	Track use of multiple channels through teacher logs and parent surveys on communication preferences.

Encourage Timely Parental Engagement- Encourage parents to reach out early using quick check-ins.	Continuing	Analyze parent feedback on the effectiveness of engagement tools and measure how frequently parents reach out proactively.

The table outlines an intervention plan to improve teacher responsiveness and foster better parent engagement. The first strategy, "Response Time Commitment," requires teachers to acknowledge receipt of messages within 24 hours. This ongoing initiative will be monitored by reviewing teacher response time logs and assessing parent satisfaction with the timeliness of the responses. The second strategy, "Use Multiple Communication Channels," offers parents alternative communication methods, such as phone calls or face-to-face meetings, in addition to digital platforms. Monitoring for this strategy will involve tracking the use of these channels through teacher logs and gathering parent feedback on their preferred communication methods via surveys. The third strategy, "Encourage Timely Parental Engagement," promotes early parent involvement through quick check-ins, encouraging parents to reach out proactively. This strategy's progress will be evaluated by analyzing parent feedback on the effectiveness of the engagement tools and measuring the frequency of proactive communication from parents. Collectively, these strategies aim to improve communication by addressing response time, providing diverse communication options, and actively involving parents in their child's education.

To Foster Collaborative Problem-Solving

Objective- Engage both parents and teachers in a collaborative approach to addressing students' needs.

Table 5: Fostering Collaborative Problem-Solving

Intervention Strategy	Timeline	Method for Monitoring Progress
Solution-Oriented Meetings- Involve parents in brainstorming potential solutions for challenges.	Continuing	Track meeting outcomes and evaluate the level of parent involvement in finding solutions.
Parent Involvement in School Activities- Encourage parents to participate in school events.	Continuing	Monitor participation rates in school activities and gather feedback from teachers and parents.
Shared Goals for Student Success- Set joint goals for student development.	Continuing	Review goal progress with teachers and parents, adjusting goals as needed based on student performance.

Table 5 outlines strategies to foster collaboration and problem-solving between teachers and parents, aiming to address challenges and enhance student success. The first strategy, "Solution-Oriented Meetings," focuses on involving parents in brainstorming solutions to challenges their children may face. The progress of this initiative will be monitored by tracking the outcomes of these meetings and evaluating the extent to which parents actively participate in finding solutions. The second strategy, "Parent Involvement in School Activities," encourages parents to participate in school events, helping to build stronger connections between parents and the school community. To assess the effectiveness of this strategy, participation rates in school activities will be monitored, along with feedback from both teachers and parents on their experiences and level of involvement. The third strategy, "Shared Goals for Student Success," involves teachers and parents collaboratively setting goals for student development. The progress of these goals will be reviewed regularly by both teachers and parents, with adjustments made as necessary based on the student's performance, ensuring that goals remain relevant and achievable.

Creation of Opportunities for Open Dialogue

Objective- Provide opportunities for more in-depth and reciprocal communication between parents and teachers.

Table 6: Creating Opportunities for Open Dialogue

Intervention Strategy	Timeline	Method for Monitoring Progress
Regular Parent-Teacher Meetings- Introduce informal meetings or "office hours" for more personalized discussions.	Quarterly/Biannually	Track participation rates in informal meetings and collect parent feedback on the quality of discussions.
Parent Advisory Committees- Establish a committee for ongoing feedback and collaboration.	3 months	Evaluate the effectiveness of the committee through surveys and participation in meetings.
Surveys and Feedback Forms- Regular surveys to capture parent feedback on communication methods.	Every 3 months	Collect and analyze survey data to identify areas for improvement in communication practices.

Table 6 outlines strategies for enhancing communication between teachers and parents. Regular parent-teacher meetings will be held quarterly or biannually, with progress tracked through participation rates and parent feedback. A parent advisory committee will be established within 3 months, and its effectiveness will be monitored through surveys and meeting participation. Additionally, surveys and feedback forms will be collected every 3 months to gather parent opinions on communication methods, with the data analyzed to identify areas for improvement. These strategies aim to strengthen school-parent collaboration through consistent engagement and feedback.

Effective communication between parents and teachers is essential in fostering a collaborative learning environment that enhances students' educational experiences. However, challenges such as accessibility issues, cultural differences, and lack of structured communication channels often hinder meaningful parent-teacher engagement. To address these concerns, a well-structured intervention plan is necessary, incorporating clear, actionable strategies aimed at improving communication, fostering inclusivity, and ensuring continuous progress.

One of the key components of this intervention plan is enhancing digital communication. Many parents may struggle with effectively utilizing digital tools, leading to delays in communication and reduced involvement in their child's academic journey. To mitigate this, regular workshops should be conducted to train parents in using digital communication platforms such as emails, messaging apps, and school portals. These workshops will help parents become more comfortable with technology, thereby improving accessibility and responsiveness in their interactions with teachers.

Another critical aspect of the plan is improving parent-teacher engagement through structured liaison committees. These committees will serve as dedicated communication channels where representatives from both groups can discuss concerns, share updates, and collaborate on initiatives to support student learning. By having a structured approach, misunderstandings can be minimized, and issues can be addressed in a timely and organized manner, ultimately strengthening the relationship between parents and teachers.

Cultural competence also plays a significant role in effective communication. Socio-cultural barriers often create misunderstandings or limit the level of engagement between parents and teachers, particularly in diverse school communities. To bridge these gaps, targeted training programs should be implemented for both teachers and parents, promoting mutual understanding and inclusivity. By fostering cultural competence, schools can create a more welcoming environment where all stakeholders feel valued and respected.

To ensure that communication strategies remain effective and relevant, integrating feedback mechanisms is essential. Regular surveys and focus groups should be conducted to gather insights from both parents and teachers regarding the effectiveness of current communication practices. This feedback will allow schools to refine their strategies, making necessary adjustments to improve engagement and responsiveness. A dynamic and adaptable communication framework ensures that evolving challenges are continuously addressed.

Finally, the role of school leadership is crucial in sustaining these efforts. Administrators should actively promote a culture of open and reciprocal dialogue between families and educators. By fostering an environment where communication is prioritized and valued, school leadership can drive long-term improvements in parent-teacher collaboration. Their commitment to transparent communication will serve as a foundation for building trust and ensuring that communication remains a central component of the school's educational approach.

By implementing these strategies—enhancing digital communication, establishing liaison committees, fostering cultural competence, integrating feedback mechanisms, and strengthening school leadership's role—schools can develop a more effective and inclusive communication framework. These efforts will ultimately lead to stronger parent-teacher relationships, reduced frustration, and improved student outcomes, creating a supportive and engaged learning community.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis reveals that a significant barrier to effective parent-teacher communication is the perceived lack of teacher responsiveness, which fosters feelings of disempowerment and exclusion among parents. Delayed replies, limited availability, and the absence of teacher-initiated communication contribute to this frustration. These challenges align with the findings of existing literature, which emphasizes the need for schools to reassess and improve their communication practices.

The lack of timely and detailed communication between parents and teachers underscores the need for schools to bridge communication gaps and offer more opportunities for open dialogue. The misalignment between digital communication preferences and parents' abilities to navigate these tools further exacerbates the problem.

The communication challenges between teachers and parents, underscore the significant role that clear, timely, and reciprocal communication plays in student success. Themes such as the lack of parental engagement, over-reliance on digital platforms, misalignment of expectations, and emotional challenges in discussing sensitive topics reveal the complexities of effective communication in education. These challenges are not only influenced by practical factors, such as the availability of digital tools or teachers' workloads but are also deeply rooted in socio-cultural norms and expectations.

There is a need for a balanced, inclusive, and strategic approach to communication between teachers and parents. The difficulties that teachers face, from the delayed or absent responses from parents to the impersonal nature of digital communication, point to the necessity of creating a more proactive and personalized engagement model. It is clear that communication must move beyond one-way interactions to become a reciprocal, dynamic process where both teachers and parents share responsibility in addressing students' needs.

It is recommended that future research adopt a mixed-methods approach by integrating qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This combination would provide a more comprehensive analysis, capturing both in-depth insights and measurable trends.

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