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Parental Involvement in Schools: Barriers, Challenges, and Strategies

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Abstract

Parental involvement is essential for students' academic success and the overall effectiveness of schools. However, many schools encounter challenges in fostering consistent parental engagement. This study investigates the factors, barriers, and challenges to parental involvement in schools within the District of Pilar, identifies effective strategies, and discovers an effective school-home partnership program to sustain and enhance this involvement. Utilizing a qualitative research design, the research involved 10 elementary teachers and 11 parents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interview and Focus Group Discussion using a researcher-made interview guide, with recordings transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically. Findings revealed that parental availability and constraints, understanding of roles, effective communication, school environment, and support services influenced parental involvement in schools. Teachers identified barriers, including parents' time constraints, economic hardships, negative past experiences, differences in language and culture, and strict school policies as hurdles to participation. Parents reported challenges such as work and family responsibilities, transportation issues, financial constraints, health concerns, communication barriers, and cultural attitudes that hindered their engagement in school activities. Nevertheless, participants successfully implemented strategies like flexible communication, relationship-building initiatives, community partnerships, budget planning, and varied involvement strategies. Consequently, School-Home Partnership Enhancement Program was proposed to bridge gaps between schools and families through flexible meetings, improved communication, educational support, and collaborative initiatives. Ultimately, this study underscores the complex interplay of the factors that affect the involvement of parents and highlights effective strategies while addressing significant challenges. It advocates for the proposed program as a means to foster collaboration that benefits the students and the parents, enriching the educational landscape within the district.

Keywords: Barriers, Parental involvement, Challenges, Strategies, and School-Home partnership.

1. Introduction

Parental involvement plays a vital role in child's growth and development. Every parent has the ultimate role to be present in the learning phase of their children. As partners of the school, they share

equal responsibility in the developing, honing, and molding holistic well-being of children. In education, it is a crucial determinant of student success and overall school effectiveness. Research consistently demonstrated that when parents actively participate in

their children's schooling, it leads to better academic performance, improved behavior, and higher graduation rates (Tayo *et al.*, 2022).

However, many schools find it challenging to effectively engage parents, often missing out on potential partnerships. According to Deysolong, (2023) there are numerous benefits associated with active parental involvement, including enhanced academic achievement, closure of the home-school divide, reinforcement of discipline and responsibility, academic assistance, and emotional and motivational support. Parents can positively impact their child's academic performance, mental health, and general growth by actively participating in their education. It is crucial for parents and teachers to work together to provide a supportive learning environment that encourages pupils to pursue their greatest potential. It is essential to acknowledge the critical role parents play in education in creating a cooperative, inclusive educational system that equips kids for success in the future.

As a public school teacher, the researcher has identified a concerning trend regarding parental participation, particularly during quarterly meetings and school activities. These meetings are intended to foster an atmosphere of collaboration, where parents can voice their opinions, share insights, and discuss their children's educational experiences. Despite the importance of these discussions, which offer insightful information about student performance, teacher assessments, and school initiatives, attendance is consistently low. The researcher frequently observes that only a small number of parents attend. Notably, those who do not participate in these meetings often include parents of children facing behavioral or academic challenges, highlighting a significant gap in engagement at a time when their involvement is most needed (Islam *et al.*, 2022). Many parents cite busy schedules as a reason for their absence, often communicating in group chats that they will cooperate with any agreed-upon actions without active involvement. Unfortunately, this mindset often results in a lack of follow-through. Many parents, particularly those who do not attend the meetings, fail to support the participation of their children in activities in school. This disengagement is further complicated by

issues, such as parents seeking clarifications in group chats about decisions made during meetings despite the teacher's efforts to note the minutes and send into group chats, as well as expressing dissatisfaction with contributions or costs associated with school events probably due to financial constraints. It is not uncommon for these individuals to voice their concerns in an aggressive manner, claiming that certain expenses exceed their financial capabilities. Moreover, the researcher feels a deep empathy for children whose school activities participation is hindered by their parents' demanding schedules. Some parents struggle to assist with preparations, such as assembling costumes or attire for events, due to work commitments. This lack of involvement not only affects individual students but also undermines the broader school community. Unfortunately, parent who are engaged frequently find the burden of responsibilities on behalf of the entire class. While they wish to help, they recognize that their children's education should be a collective responsibility, and they feel obliged to contribute for the sake of their children. These supportive parents help by tailoring costumes, preparing attire, lending clothing items, doing make-up and hairdo, and supervising during events.

Additionally, the researcher has noted a nonchalant attitude among some parents when called to special meetings concerning their child's misbehavior or academic challenges. This lack of urgency regarding serious issues further highlights the need for increased parental engagement in educational process. Moreover, the researcher, as an educator, observed that there are some parents, who did not involve and engage themselves in activities in school such as programs specifically those from low-income families. Additionally, the impact of modern challenges, such as digital learning tools and evolving family dynamics, on parental involvement strategies remained underexplored. Longitudinal studies are also needed to assess the long-term effectiveness of these strategies in fostering sustained parental engagement. Additionally, involvement of parent in schools faces several challenges, including time constraints for working parents, lack of effective communication between schools and families, and limited resources to support engagement. Cultural and language barriers can also

hinder participation, particularly in diverse communities. Also, some parents may feel intimidated or unwelcome in school settings, leading to lower involvement. Addressing these challenges requires schools to adopt inclusive strategies, such as flexible meeting schedules, multilingual communication, as well as building a friendly environment for all families.

This study explored innovative strategies for enhancing the involvement of parents in schools, recognizing that each community is unique. By examining best practices and gathering insights from school administrators, teachers, and parents, this research aimed to identify actionable approaches that foster meaningful connections between the schools and the families. Ultimately, the goal was to create inclusive environment, where parents feel they are empowered in contributing to their children's education, paving the way for improved academic outcomes and a thriving school community. Through this study, it is hoped to illuminate pathways that encourage collaboration, strengthen relationships, and ultimately benefit the entire educational ecosystem. Thus, this research intended to investigate the different collaborative strategies and support used by the school in sustaining and enhancing the involvement of parents to the education of their children and use these set of evidence-based strategies that schools can adopt to better involve parents in supporting their children's education, ultimately improving student performance and reducing educational disparities. This study investigated the barriers and challenges encountered by teachers and parents in relation to the involvement of parents in schools identify specific strategies that participants implemented.

2. Methodology

This study utilized qualitative research through narrative inquiry, exploring the personal stories of parents and educators about their involvements with collaboration in schools. The selection of this approach was appropriate for understanding the sense created by identified teachers and parents regarding the involvement of parents in schools, as well as interpreting their experiences and the level to which they are exposed to the involvement of parents in education. The participants were the 10 elementary

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teachers for the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and 11 parents for the in-depth interview, who were selected through purposive sampling. The benchmark used for choosing participants was the inclusion and exclusion criteria for teachers who have worked at the selected schools for at least three years and have prior experience in engaging with parents; and parents who had children attending identified schools for the School Year 2024-2025 in the District of Pilar, where this was conducted, even if they were not involved in education.

This study employed two distinct sets of researcher-developed interview guides designed for in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, all anchored in Epstein's Framework of the six types of involvement. These guides were essential for gathering the necessary information from the participants. The in-depth interview guide was utilized during interviews with parents, while the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide was used for discussions with teachers. The research instruments were designed based on the research objectives, drawing from existing literature on parental involvement. The questions addressed topics such as factors, barriers, and challenges related to parental involvement and strategies employed by the participants to enhance this involvement in schools. Validation of the research instruments was conducted by a panel of experts, the advisory committee, and the examining committee.

The FGD was conducted to have an in-depth examination of shared experiences and perspectives. A structured guide was used to facilitate discussion while ensuring that all key themes were addressed. The in-depth interview was conducted to gather individual insights and deeper reflections on the involvement of parents in schools. The responses gathered were then transcribed, translated, and were subjected to thematic analysis, identifying recurring themes, patterns, and insights. Data were categorized, coded, and interpreted to highlight the factors influencing the involvement of parents, barriers faced, and possible strategies for improvement.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the thematic analysis of the responses gathered through Focus Group Discussion and In-

Depth Interview, the result revealed that parental availability and constraints, parents' basic understanding, communication, school environment and culture, and support services were factors that affected parental involvement in schools. Each theme revealed critical insights into the challenges, enablers, and overall impact of the involvement of parents on student learning and development.

The result implies that parental involvement in education is vital for ensuring student success, but many parents' encountered significant challenges that limit their engagement, such as time constraints, busy work schedules, and household responsibilities, which often prevented parents in attending to school events and meetings. Additionally, a lack of awareness about school policies and activities created feelings of disconnection from the school community. Financial difficulties also hindered participation in school functions, as some families struggled to afford associated costs. Communication barriers, especially for non-native speakers, complicated understanding on school requirements and engaging with teachers effectively. Furthermore, cultural factors also influenced how parents perceive their roles in education, affecting their overall involvement. To strengthen partnerships between the schools and the families, it is essential to address these challenges, as doing so will ultimately enhance students' academic performance and emotional well-being.

The result followed with the result obtained by Mekonnen, (2017) which stated that most countries all over the world have become more diverse due to different factors such as social, economic, and political developments. This is evident in school communities where learners from different backgrounds, particularly those from low socio-economic communities have increasingly been affected by these factors. The circumstances surrounding schools and communities determine the level of effective parental involvement. Parents from disadvantaged backgrounds experience challenges ranging from low-income jobs, and illiteracy, to inequality in the social space. While these parents desire to be involved in their children's education, however, due to different circumstances, such as lack of time, the need to be working long hours, or even their lack of education they are UniversePG | www.universepg.com

generally ineffective. Parents generally do not pay attention to the education of their children since they might go to work during school days and may even return home only over the weekend. Furthermore, some parents work on farms, while others may work in town as domestic workers.

Parental involvement in education shows a vital role in student success, yet several barriers prevented parents from fully engaging in school-related activities. The results identified four major themes that served as significant obstacles to parental participation, which were the reasons limiting parental involvement, parents' schedules and commitments, language or cultural barriers, and school policies. These barriers highlighted the challenges that parents face, ranging from personal and financial struggles to institutional limitations that make school engagement difficult. Understanding these barriers was essential in creating strategies that promote a supportive and inclusive environment for parents.

Based on the experiences of the teachers, one major reason that did not allow the parents in participating to the activities in school, especially during important meetings, was due to their hectic schedule leaving them no time to attend their child's school activities. The result implies that schools must implement flexible scheduling and provide advance notice for meetings and events to accommodate parents' busy lives. By doing so, schools can enhance parental involvement and ensure that families can actively participate in the education of their children despite their hectic schedules. Parental involvement in school activities was significantly hindered by parents' negative past experiences with educational settings. These experiences included conflicts with teachers, feelings of low self-confidence regarding their ability in engaging with the school system, and fear or intimidation when interacting with educators. Such barriers created a sense of alienation, making parents less likely to participate in the education of their children, which ultimately affected the collaborative relationship between families and schools.

The result was in line with Magwa and Mugari, (2017) findings that parent's occupation status and income have a bearing on parental participation in children's

school work. Parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are reportedly more active in their kids' academic work than parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

The findings were also consistent with Motshisi *et al.* (2024) study, which found that many parents are hesitant to seek assistance for fear of damaging their image. This hesitancy impedes effective communication with teachers, who are often willing to assist and encourage participation of parents. Additionally, Raja *et al.* (2023) averred that parental involvement may be discouraged if the institution exhibits an unwelcoming atmosphere or if parents have experienced negative interactions with institution staff. Likewise, Cole, (2020) findings revealed that how parents perceived themselves as being able to support their children determine their level of involvement. Parents who did not feel efficacious were least likely to support their children. This made them fearful or embarrassed when they were invited to meet with the teachers and therefore they avoid visiting the school.

The result also agreed to the result of Hornby and Blackwell, (2018) which identified parent's own negative experiences as barrier impacting the willingness and ability of some parents to engage with school staff. Gokalp *et al.* (2021) asserted that is important for teachers to empathize with parents and to build trust to address these challenges. Similarly, Guo and Zhao, (2025) claimed that almost all parents did not feel unwelcome at school. Hence, that is not a barrier to engaging in school-related activities. Huang *et al.* (2018) found that almost all parents do not feel unwelcome at school. However, the result was inconsistent with research by Poissant *et al.* (2024) and Goss, (2019) who argued that schools desire an increased parental presence in schools, participants recounted times when they felt unwelcomed. For example, according to Poissant *et al.* (2024), a semi-structured telephone interview, only 16% of parents felt welcomed at school. According to Goss, (2019) a number of parents also stated that they frequently felt excluded and unwelcome at the school and that it was challenging for parents and schools to work together. Involvement of parents in schools was also influenced by various challenges that hinder parents' ability in

participating actively in their child's education. Based on the analysis of the Focus Group Discussion and In-Depth Interview, the result revealed six major themes that hindered the involvement of parents in schools based on the key informants' experiences, which were participation of parents in school activities, community influence, attendance, work and family responsibilities, transportation, and communication difficulties.

The result implies that parents' working commitments affected their attendance and participation to school activities as they cannot just leave work easily whenever they are called at school leading to reduced participation. The result agreed to Berry, (2019) who confirmed work commitments as the largest barrier they confront to parental involvement. Similar to this, Guo and Zhao, (2025) found that parents frequently have to put their jobs first when employment and children's school-related activities conflict, which leads to a low degree of involvement. Prior research by Koepp *et al.* (2022) and Zhou *et al.* (2023) showed that insufficient parental participation had a detrimental impact on children's academic performance, peer and teacher relationships, and life satisfaction. Oranga *et al.* (2022) found that financial limitations were one of the obstacles preventing families from being actively involved in their children's education.

Similar findings were obtained by Hirano *et al.* (2018) who indicated that practical barriers in the involvement of parents in school include transportation challenges. Furthermore, Anderson and Minke, (2021) declared that another global issue to the involvement of parents in education is the communication barriers between the teachers and the parents. Despite technological advancements, many families, particularly those in low-income areas, lack access to the tools needed for effective communication with schools. Digital illiteracy, limited internet access, and language differences further complicate communication, making it difficult for teachers and parents to maintain regular contact. Additionally Jefferson, (2015) expressed that poor communication from the school can deter parents from getting involved. This disincentive arises from schools' inability to promptly and effectively announce school activities and restricting access to critical information to those with Internet connectivity (thus

excludes those from lower-income families with no such access at home).

The result also revealed different strategies that schools used to enhance parental participation, focusing on key areas such as school programs and initiatives, open communication, partnerships with community organizations, training and resources, and financial strategies. These approaches provided structured opportunities for engagement, created inclusive communication channels, leveraged community support, equipped parents with essential skills, and addressed economic barriers to participation.

It was also found that school innovative programs and projects like Parent-Teacher Association, *Nanay Ko, Teacher Ko Program*, educational workshops and seminars, feeding programs, *Brigada Eskwela*, and other school activities gave parents the opportunities to participate, hence enhanced the involvement of parents in the activities of the school.

The result implies that innovative school programs and projects, such as digital engagement platforms, interactive parent workshops, and community-based projects, can serve as promising strategies to enhance the involvement of parents. These initiatives created flexible, creative avenues for parents to participate, foster a sense of shared ownership, and strengthen the school – home partnership.

The results of the study verified the results of Khumalo, (2023) which claimed that here is a need to increase opportunities for informal parent-teacher-staff communications and interactions. Parents' opinions and recommendations for participation should be solicited during these events. Informal conversations and exchanges between parents, teachers, and staff should occur during school-sponsored parent participation activities. At this point, the school ought to take advantage of the chance to get feedback and ideas for enhancements from the parents. Additionally, the school can utilize this time to inform parents about school policies, forthcoming events, and general ways that parents can help their children learn.

The result supported Park and Paulick, (2021) who argued that home visit practice frequently opened UniversePG | www.universepg.com

teachers' eyes to students' experiences about which they previously knew very little. Seeing and understanding their students' homes cultivated in teachers a deeper understanding of and patience for the behaviors they observed in school.

The result also corroborated with Chappell and Ratliffe, (2021) that despite the many modes of communication that exist with parents, one size will not fit all. In fact, a range of online communication strategies have the potential to promote quality relationships between schools and families. It is highly recommended that teachers conduct a survey at the beginning of the school year to evaluate and plan for the needs of their diverse parent community with respect to communication preferences (e.g., phone calls, email, texts, and apps), technology access, and languages spoken. With this information in hand, teachers are encouraged to start at the beginning of the school year and to make communications with parents personalized, positive, and linked to learning (See *et al.*, 2020). It is important for teachers to streamline so that parent communication is efficient, yet also ensure that the modes of communication are flexible enough to be accessible and meaningful for each parent.

The result was also in line with that of Bordalba and Bochaca, (2019) which highlighted the importance and type of information that is appropriate to share. Some parents and teachers expressed concern that the digital communication be reserved for academic issues and concrete information (e.g., deadlines, appointments) and that more “sensitive, complex, and serious” issues should be addressed through personal contact.

Based on the study, schools collaborated with barangay health centers, Local Government Units (LGUs), and private organizations to implement programs such as deworming, immunization, feeding programs, and hygiene awareness campaigns. These initiatives ensured that students remained healthy, reducing absenteeism and improving academic performance. By engaging parents in these programs, such as obtaining consent for medical services or involving them in nutrition and wellness activities, schools fostered a sense of shared responsibility for student health. Additionally, these programs strengthened partner-

ships with health organizations, allowing schools to provide better services and resources.

The result implies that implementing a comprehensive health and wellness program, incorporating mental health workshops, nutrition education, physical activity sessions, and stress reduction initiatives, can foster a supportive environment that enhances parental engagement. When parents witness schools investing in their children's overall well-being, it not only builds trust but also encourages them to participate actively in school activities.

The result supported the study of Herman and Reinke, (2017). They found that when teachers had ample training that improved their perception of family involvement, the families were more involved, and their involvement had better results. Sparkman, (2024) emphasized that teachers must be trained on how to engage the parents in their children's education. Teachers need to be confident in their ability to communicate with as well as make connections with families.

4. Conclusion

Many parents are unaware of their role's importance and lack confidence due to their educational backgrounds. Effective communication is crucial but often hindered by delays and technological barriers. A welcoming school environment and supportive services like home visits and community partnerships significantly enhance parental engagement. The study emphasizes the need for schools to adopt inclusive practices to address these diverse factors. Many parents prioritize work for financial stability, leaving little time for school activities. Economic constraints, such as financial contributions and school fees, particularly discourage low-income parents. Negative past experiences may lead to a lack of confidence and reluctance to engage. Cultural and language barriers make it difficult for non-native speakers to understand school policies and communicate with educators. Additionally, strict school policies with rigid attendance requirements often conflict with parents' work schedules and transportation challenges, further hindering involvement. Many parents struggle to manage their jobs and household duties alongside school involvement. Long distances and high trans-

portation costs further impede attendance. Financial limitations often lead parents to prioritize basic needs over school functions. Health issues also pose significant barriers. Communication challenges, such as delayed responses in group chats, are often exacerbated by work schedules and technical difficulties. Cultural attitudes that view education as solely the school's responsibility further reduce parental engagement. Building relationships with teachers helped parents feel more confident and comfortable to participate in the activities of the school. Community partnerships and support services provided financial aid and other resources. Budget planning allowed parents to set aside funds for school expenses. Additionally, parents who couldn't attend in person sent representatives to maintain their engagement. These strategies collectively helped parents navigate challenges and stay getting involved in the education of their children.

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6. Conflicts of Interest

The author confirms no conflict of interest.

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