

UNCOVERING THE EXPERIENCES OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS IN OPTIMIZING PARENT-TEACHER PARTNERSHIP IN SCHOOL

Jeper A. Gragasin¹

¹Researcher, The Rizal Memorial Colleges, Inc.

ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explored the experiences of secondary school teachers in optimizing parent teacher partnership in school in Banaybanay District, Division of Davao Oriental. Furthermore, this investigated their coping strategies and insights that were derived from their experiences drawn from the findings of this study. Qualitative – phenomenological study was employed in exploring the views of the ten (10) participants of which primary instrument of data gathering was through in- depth interview. Findings revealed that after analyzing the responses of the participants about their experiences as high school teachers in optimizing parent-teacher partnership in school, the following three themes emerged: encountering uncooperative parents, dealing with parents with different characteristics, and experiencing problems in terms of communication. Furthermore, on their coping mechanisms adopted, the following were the emergent themes namely extending patience in dealing with parents, appreciating parents' efforts, and involving parents with different school activities. Finally, the participants shared about their insights drawn from the findings of the study, the following three themes emerged: emphasizing parental participation and involvement, implementing proper methods of communication, and respecting the community's diverse values and views. Results imply that children are more likely to perform well in school and have better social and emotional development when their parents are active in their education. This is especially true for younger children. Parental participation enhances student performance, self-esteem, and conduct. The establishment of solid ties between parents and the schools their children attend is another benefit of this practice. Likewise, the level of performance of teachers may be improved through parental participation. It is easier for parents to understand the job that teachers do and the obstacles they confront when there is more communication between teachers and parents. This, in turn, helps teachers feel valued.

Keywords: parent-teacher partnership, high school teachers, phenomenology, Davao Oriental, Philippines

1. INTRODUCTION

The value of the home/school partnership is widely acknowledged but not always simple to promote or maintain. As society transitions from small communities with close connections to a diverse mobile culture, the complexity of relationships, roles, and functions makes these collaborations more challenging. Although parent-teacher collaboration must be a two-way dynamic to be successful, this paper focuses on teachers' roles in that partnership. Teachers serve as the primary link between home and school partnerships (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2019).

The majority of teachers consider maintaining positive interactions with parents crucial. However, images of positive parent-teacher relationships differ significantly, just as learning and teaching environments do. At one end of the relationship spectrum is an ideal social distance paired with mutual respect, a successful separation of responsibilities between home and school, and a solid connection. The family effectively complies with the school's requirements, and the school successfully educates the child without placing an excessive burden on the home (Henry, 2016).

Teachers frequently have conflicting emotions about their interactions with parents and families. Positive sentiments of teamwork and mutually cherished accomplishment exist with some parents, while frustration, helplessness, or even fury over divergent perceptions and understandings occur with others. The degree to which parental cares and concerns align with those of the teacher greatly influences how successfully instructors create partnerships with parents. Unlike many other types of interactions in people's lives, the parent-teacher relationship is paired by assignment rather than choice. The common interest is the education of a child. Conflict is absent in all successful parent-teacher interactions (Ellis, 2012).

A growing academic cooperation seeks to raise pupils' educational standing through teacher-parent collaboration. Instructors are increasingly involved in working with parents to promote educational results in addition to teaching children. Collaborations between parents and teachers have appreciated the various knowledge, experiences, and abilities that parents and teachers bring to the table when making decisions about how best to meet the educational requirements of specific pupils (Epstein, 2016).

Parents and educators hold the same objectives for children; they want each student to put forth their best effort to not only complete their coursework but also to see development across the board. This collaboration happens when

parents and teachers work together, maintaining open lines of communication, and participating in school activities and projects (Whirlledge, 2016).

In the Philippines, teachers must come up with innovative ideas to ensure students learn everything they need to know. Collaboration with parents is one of these ideas. Children tend to flourish not just in school but also in life when schools collaborate with families to facilitate learning (Berla, 2017). This study supports the Department of Education's mandate outlined in DepEd Order No. 54, series of 2009, which emphasizes various PTA activities within school premises or involving the school, its personnel, or students.

In the context of the Davao Oriental division, specifically in the Banaybanay District, one of the many dilemmas teachers face is the development and maintenance of professional partnerships with parents, especially since not all parents have the capacity to spend time following up on their child's school activities.

There are several qualitative studies about parent-teacher partnerships, but these often focus on parents' perspectives. Many parents do not have sufficient time and resources to actively participate in various school activities that may foster parent-teacher partnerships (Obeta, 2014). This prompted the researcher to propose a qualitative investigation into the experiences of teachers as they participate in various means of optimizing parent-teacher partnerships in schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of secondary school teachers in optimizing parent-teacher partnerships in schools in the Banaybanay District, Division of Davao Oriental. These teachers are currently working in public schools in the Banaybanay District. This study aimed to understand and develop in-depth information about the participants' experiences, challenges, and suggestions for optimizing parent-teacher partnerships in schools.

Additionally, this study sought to discover teachers' perspectives on optimizing and developing appropriate parent-teacher partnerships in schools. Parent-teacher partnership was generally defined as a renewed collaboration between teachers and parents, working together in the best interest of students.

Research Questions

This research was designed to describe the experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and perspectives of teachers in optimizing parent-teacher partnerships in schools in the Banaybanay District, Division of Davao de Oriental. This study specifically aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of teachers in optimizing parent-teacher partnerships in schools?
2. How do teachers cope with the challenges involved in optimizing parent-teacher partnerships in schools?
3. What insights can the participants share with policymakers in relation to optimizing parent-teacher partnerships in schools?

Significance of the Study

This study was intended to contextualize the body of knowledge within the public school setting, contributing greatly to the following:

Department of Education: Findings are useful for modifying existing practices and policies for parent-teacher partnerships in schools to better respond to learners' needs and contexts.

School Administrators: They may benefit from insights useful in providing solutions to challenges faced in enhancing parent-teacher partnerships in schools.

Teachers: The findings help teachers understand how they can contribute to optimizing parent-teacher partnerships, which may be vital for maximizing students' learning experiences.

Parents: This study highlights the crucial role parents play in education and encourages them to be more involved in educating their children.

Students: By raising awareness among teachers, parents, and administrators, students will be better guided to convince their parents to participate in school activities.

Future Researchers: This can serve as a guide for future research, aiding in identifying variables associated with the subject and providing ideas for related research projects.

Definition of Terms

Parent-Teacher Partnership: A renewed collaboration between teachers and parents, working together in the best interest of students (Oxford Dictionary, 2020). In this study, it refers to the partnership shared by parents of students and teachers at a public high school in Banaybanay District, Division of Davao de Oriental for SY 2022-2023.

Experiences: Practical contact with and observation of facts or events (Oxford Dictionary, 2020). In this study, it refers to the participants' personal encounters in optimizing parent-teacher partnerships in schools.

Teacher: A person who helps students acquire knowledge, competence, or virtue (Department of Education, 2020). In this research, teachers are those teaching learners from grades 1 to 12 and who are encouraged to optimize parent-teacher partnerships in schools.

Review of Significant Literature

Parent-Teacher Partnership

Most teachers receive little to no training on effectively forming partnerships with the parents of their students (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2019). Instructors frequently cite interacting with parents as one of the most difficult aspects of their job, causing up to 50% of teachers to quit within the first five years (Gibbs, 2005). Successful partnerships are collaborative in nature and founded on mutual respect, shared commitment, responsibility, and accountability for results (Gettinger & Guetschow, 2018). Understanding how parents and teachers view this partnership is crucial for effective collaborations.

One of the main problems contributing to an unbalanced relationship between parents and teachers is communication. Teachers often feel their professionalism is questioned when parents believe their child's account without considering the teacher's perspective (Miretzky, 2014). Teachers encourage parents to communicate openly, learn about their expectations, and participate in their children's education. Parents desire open communication channels, seeking information about their children's lives, both good and bad (Robinson & Fine, 2014). Misunderstandings and strained relationships often arise from differences in perspectives and expectations (Turner, 2015).

Challenges on Parent-Teacher Partnership

Parental participation is influenced by various factors, including socioeconomic status, parental beliefs, and perceptions. Teacher attitudes and family resources are significant barriers to parental involvement. Increasing parental participation training for teachers can help address these barriers (Nix, 2014). Effective parent-teacher collaboration relies on mutual respect, shared responsibilities, and active communication (Christenson, 2012). Understanding parental engagement as a developmental process and identifying appropriate involvement types for different student ages and stages is crucial (Hiatt-Michael, 2016).

Theoretical Lens

This study used Grolnick's Parental Involvement Theory (1997), which conceptualizes three dimensions of parental involvement: behavioral, personal, and cognitive/intellectual. These interactions affect students' motivation, sense of competence, and belief in their control over school success. Heider's Balance Theory (Monsour, Betty, & Kurzweil, 1993) focuses on balancing interpersonal relationships between parents and teachers, predicting that balanced relationships lead to more effective collaborations and positive student outcomes.

Conclusion

Understanding and optimizing parent-teacher partnerships are crucial for enhancing students' learning experiences. By exploring the experiences, challenges, and perspectives of teachers in the Banaybanay District, this study provides valuable insights for policymakers, school administrators, teachers, parents, students, and future researchers. Effective collaboration between parents and teachers can significantly impact students' academic and personal growth.

2. METHOD

Philosophical Assumptions of the Study

As a qualitative researcher, I hold specific beliefs and philosophical assumptions that shape my work. This study explores the experiences of secondary school teachers in optimizing parent-teacher partnerships in the Banaybanay District, Division of Davao Oriental. To guide my efforts, I investigated theoretical approaches to qualitative research. Creswell (2015) identified four philosophical assumptions:

Ontology: Reality is subjective and multifaceted, constructed by study participants. Multiple realities exist, including those of the researcher, participants, and readers interpreting the study.

Epistemology: Researchers should lessen the distance between themselves and their subjects by collaborating and spending time in the field.

Axiology: Researchers' values influence their work, and they should openly incorporate their perspectives with those of participants.

Rhetorics: Researchers use unique language and a personal narrative style, employing qualitative terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Qualitative Assumptions

This study used a phenomenological approach, aiming to describe experiences without hypotheses or assumptions. Phenomenology explores events subjectively through participants' eyes, focusing on their perceptions and experiences.

Research Design

This qualitative research used a phenomenological approach, following Creswell (2015). It aimed to investigate the lived experiences of secondary school teachers in optimizing parent-teacher partnerships. Data were collected through in-depth virtual interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis to formulate major themes.

Research Participants

This study involved ten secondary teachers from the Banaybanay District, Division of Davao Oriental. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on specific criteria, such as holding a permanent teaching position and having experienced challenges in optimizing parent-teacher partnerships. This sample size aligns with Creswell's (2014) recommendation of 8 to 14 participants for qualitative research.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report (1979), ensuring respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Measures included obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and providing participants with the right to withdraw. Data privacy was maintained following the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act 10173).

Role of the Researcher

As the principal data collector, I fulfilled roles as interviewer, observer, transcriber, translator, and data analyst. I ensured ethical rigor and obtained necessary permissions before conducting the study. Building trust with participants, I conducted interviews, transcribed data, and performed thematic analysis to extract key themes.

Data Collection

Data collection involved virtual in-depth interviews, adhering to IATF protocols for safety. Permission was obtained from relevant authorities, and participants were selected through purposive sampling. Open-ended questions were used to gather detailed responses, which were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase method. This involved familiarizing with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing the report. Environmental triangulation was used to ensure the validity of findings.

Analytical Framework

Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis method provided a flexible and effective research tool for analyzing data. The six-phase process included transcription, data extraction, and theme development, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the data.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, I followed Creswell's (2015) guidelines. Measures included using well-established methods, engaging in member checking, and providing detailed contextual information. An audit trail documented the research process, enhancing the study's credibility.

Credibility: Ensured through well-established methods, iterative questioning, and data triangulation. **Transferability:** Achieved by providing comprehensive background material and context.

Dependability: Maintained through thorough documentation and adherence to ethical procedures.

Confirmability: Ensured by maintaining objectivity, using an audit trail, and engaging participants in member checking.

Analytical Framework of the Study

This methodological approach ensures a robust and ethical investigation into the experiences of secondary school teachers in optimizing parent-teacher partnerships in the Banaybanay District.

3. RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the experiences of high school teachers in optimizing parent-teacher partnerships in school. The study utilized a qualitative framework with methods common to phenomenological research for data collection and analysis. The outcomes are based on the high school teachers' lived experiences.

Experiences of High School Teachers in Optimizing Parent-Teacher Partnership in School

Encountering Uncooperative Parents

Teacher-participants reported significant challenges with uncooperative parents who do not engage with their children's education.

IDI-02:

"I encountered parents who do not check on their children at school."

IDI-01:

"It is hard to build a good professional relationship with the parents who are passive in their responsibilities in school."

IDI-06:

"It is challenging on the part of the teacher if parents do not participate in school activities and they are also not updated on what needs to be done in school."

These responses highlight the difficulty teachers face in building effective relationships with disengaged parents. Such challenges hinder interaction and communication, which are essential for a productive parent-teacher partnership.

Supporting parental involvement maximizes cooperation, reduces hostility, and enhances teachers' professional standing (Godber, 2012). Programs like the National Network of Partnership Schools have shown that effective school/family/community collaborations lead to increased parental involvement, stronger relationships between parents and teachers, and improved student academic achievement (Sanders & Epstein, 2015).

Dealing with Parents with Different Characteristics

Teachers must interact with a diverse range of parents, each with unique personalities and characteristics.

IDI-04:

"Sometimes, you can encounter parents who have an offensive manner in dealing with teachers."

IDI-03:

"As a teacher, you can interact with various kinds of people."

IDI-05:

"There are parents who are good in dealing with teachers, there are also those who are shy and there are also parents who are angry."

Dealing with parents of various personalities requires patience and understanding from teachers. Unclear role definitions between parents and teachers can impede effective collaboration (Braley, 2012). Teachers' attitudes and family resources significantly influence parental involvement (Lassiter & Briggs, 2015).

Experiencing Problems in Terms of Communication

Communication issues between teachers and parents were another significant theme.

IDI-05:

"As a teacher, we need to communicate with parents and we should be mindful in the manner that we communicate to them to avoid misinterpretation."

IDI-04:

"Open lines of communication are really important between parents and teachers in order to develop a good relationship and work together for the benefit of the students."

IDI-07:

"I find it hard sometimes to get a hold of other parents and thus disables me to update them if there are important updates about their children."

Effective communication is vital for a strong parent-teacher relationship. Researchers emphasize that a lack of proper communication contributes to an unbalanced relationship between parents and teachers (Miretzky, 2014). Both parents and teachers desire open channels of communication to stay informed about students' progress and needs (Boers, 2012).

Coping Mechanisms of High School Teachers in Optimizing Parent-Teacher Partnership in School

Extending Patience in Dealing with Parents

Teachers extend patience when dealing with parents, particularly when explaining students' status.

IDI-06:

“Since we are teachers, we really need to understand the parents of our students even though there are times that they cannot participate in school activities.”

IDI-01:

“We really need to make the parents understand why they need to be involved in school in order to support their children.”

IDI-08:

“Your patience can really be tested especially if there are parents who sometimes have inappropriate behavior.”

Teachers develop patience by accepting that not everything will go their way all the time. Effective partnerships require patience, planning, and structure (Couchenour & Chrisman, 2014).

Appreciating Parents’ Effort

Teachers appreciate parents’ efforts, which helps build professional relationships.

IDI-02:

“I really appreciate those parents who are very involved with their children’s education. This really helps to build a good professional relationship between the teacher and parents.”

IDI-10:

“I have a lot of parents in my class who are very supportive with their children’s activities in school since they are open-minded in letting their children participate in school activities.”

Appreciation encourages parental involvement and fosters a supportive environment (Turner, 2015). Inviting parents to participate in school activities helps build strong partnerships and supports students’ literacy development (Mahoney et al., 2022).

Involving Parents with Different School Activities

Engaging parents in school activities helps teachers build stronger relationships with them.

IDI-01:

“It really develops a good professional relationship between the parents and the students when parents are frequently participating in various school activities.”

IDI-04:

“We invite parents during our school activities in order for them to witness how their children behave during these activities.”

IDI-07:

“There are specific times when it is important for parents to go to school, especially during school activities which need their presence and participation.”

Participation in school activities allows parents to understand school policies and contribute to their children’s adherence to school rules (McConchie, 2014).

Insights of High School Teachers in Optimizing Parent-Teacher Partnership in School

Emphasizing Parental Participation and Involvement

Teachers emphasize the importance of parental participation and involvement in school activities.

IDI-03:

“One of our best practices in school is that we give awards to those parents who have perfect attendance in school activities.”

IDI-05:

“Parents become more motivated to participate in school activities if they feel that their efforts and participation are appreciated.”

IDI-06:

“Both the teacher and the students can appreciate if parents are participating in school activities.”

Recognition and appreciation of parents’ efforts motivate further engagement and foster a welcoming school environment (Epstein, 2016).

Implementing Proper Methods of Communication

Proper communication methods are crucial for fostering good relationships between parents and teachers.

IDI-09:

“Teachers need to show good communication in order for them to be respected by the people in the community.”

IDI-10:

“We should have open lines of communication with the parents in order for them to be comfortable in checking up on their children.”

Effective communication involves honesty and support between teachers and parents, essential for shared decision-making and improving student performance (Christenson, 2012).

Respecting the Community's Diverse Values and Views

Teachers respect the diverse values and beliefs of the community to maintain harmonious relationships.

IDI-03:

“In order for teachers to avoid offending parents and the people in the community, they should be aware of the community's values and beliefs.”

IDI-04:

“It is vital to show respect to their beliefs.”

IDI-05:

“We should be tactful because it is possible that we might offend others if we are not aware that we are already criticizing their beliefs.”

Respecting community values and beliefs fosters a collaborative and respectful environment, essential for effective teacher-parent partnerships (Friend & Cook, 2017).

This chapter has detailed the experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of high school teachers in optimizing parent-teacher partnerships. These findings underline the importance of patience, appreciation, involvement, communication, and respect in building effective and supportive relationships between teachers and parents.

4. DISCUSSIONS

Summary of the Study

This phenomenological study explored the experiences of secondary school teachers in optimizing parent-teacher partnerships in Banaybanay District, Division of Davao Oriental. The research aimed to understand and develop in-depth information about the challenges and suggestions of teachers in fostering effective parent-teacher collaborations. The study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach guided by thematic analysis, allowing for a deep understanding of the participants' lived experiences.

The findings revealed three primary themes regarding teachers' experiences in optimizing parent-teacher partnerships: encountering uncooperative parents, dealing with parents with diverse characteristics, and experiencing communication problems. Additionally, three coping mechanisms were identified: extending patience, appreciating parents' efforts, and involving parents in school activities. Lastly, three insights emerged: emphasizing parental participation and involvement, implementing proper communication methods, and respecting the community's diverse values and views.

Implications

The analysis of the study's results leads to several key implications:

1. Enhanced Student Performance and Development:

Parental involvement in education positively impacts children's academic performance, self-esteem, and conduct. This is particularly significant for younger children.

Positive interactions between parents and teachers contribute to better social and emotional development in children.

2. Improved Teacher Performance:

Increased parental participation helps parents understand the challenges faced by teachers, leading to greater appreciation and support for teachers' efforts.

Enhanced communication between teachers and parents helps teachers feel valued and supported, potentially improving their performance.

3. Collaborative Planning and Decision-Making:

Involving families in planning and decision-making processes ensures that children receive appropriate support and adjustments in the classroom.

Parents become more knowledgeable about their children's developmental stages and the appropriate reinforcement methods.

4. Increased Parental Commitment:

Improved communication fosters a comfortable environment for parents to voice concerns about school procedures.

Parents' commitment to the institution increases as they feel more involved and appreciated.

5. Positive Child Outcomes:

Collaboration between parents and teachers leads to improved academic success, social competence, and emotional well-being for children.

Children benefit from a cohesive approach to their education both at school and at home.

Future Directions of the Study

Based on the findings and implications, the following recommendations and future directions are suggested:

1. Intensifying Communication, Consistency, and Collaboration:

Strengthen communication channels between home and school to ensure effective information exchange.

Maintain consistency in providing learning opportunities at home, aligning them with school activities.

Foster collaboration through frequent communication and consistent support, focusing on positive strategies to help children reach their full potential.

2. Further Research on Communication and Collaboration:

Conduct additional studies on the efforts of parents and educators to improve communication and collaboration in the classroom. Re-interview participating educators to assess changes in their perspectives and needs over time, providing insights into the evolution of parent-teacher partnerships.

3. Focus Group Discussions:

Utilize focus groups comprising teachers, parents, and principals to collect data, ensuring more accurate and reliable findings.

Explore diverse perspectives and experiences through group discussions to enrich the understanding of parent-teacher collaborations.

4. Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methods:

Future research should employ a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to obtain more valid and reliable results.

Quantitative data can complement qualitative insights, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing parent-teacher partnerships.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of effective parent-teacher partnerships in enhancing student performance and well-being. By intensifying communication, maintaining consistency, and fostering collaboration, educators and parents can work together to support children's education. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics, incorporating diverse methodologies to deepen the understanding of effective parent-teacher collaborations.

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