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

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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.

Index Terms— parent-teacher partnership, high school teachers, phenomenology, Davao Oriental, Philippines.

1. Introduction

Although the value of the home/school partnership is widely acknowledged, it is not always simple to promote or maintain. As we have transitioned from small communities with close connections to a very diverse mobile culture, collaborations have frequently become more challenging due to the complexity of relationships, roles, and functions. Although the

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 the home and school partnerships (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2019).

The majority of teachers consider maintaining positive interactions with parents. Images of positive parent-teacher relationships, however, differ just as much as those of learning and teaching environments do. The ideal social distance paired with mutual respect, a successful separation of responsibilities between home and school, and a solid connection are at one end of the relationship spectrum. The family effectively complies with the requirements of the school, and the school successfully educates the kid without placing an excessive burden on the home (Henry, 2016).

Teachers frequently have conflicting emotions when they consider their interactions with parents and families. With some parents, there are positive sentiments of teamwork and mutually cherished accomplishment; nevertheless, with other parents, there is a sense of frustration, helplessness, or even fury over divergent perceptions and understandings. The degree to which parental cares and concerns align with those of the teacher will greatly influence how successfully instructors create partnerships with parents. The parent-teacher relationship is paired by assignment rather than choice, which is different from many other types of interactions in people's life. The education of a youngster is of common interest. Conflict is absent in all successful parent-teacher interactions, which is a commonality (Ellis, 2012).

A growing academic cooperation that seeks to raise pupils' educational standing is teacher-parent collaboration. In fact, instructors are increasingly involved in working with parents to promote educational results in addition to teaching kids. 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).

The same objectives are held by parents and educators for kids and pupils; they want each person to put forth their best effort in order to not only complete their coursework but also to

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see development across the board. When parents and teachers collaborate, this will happen. Maintaining open lines of communication between parents and teachers is one method to achieve this. Parents can also assist by designating a time for homework at home. Third, teachers can contact parents via phone calls, emails, blogs, newsletters, report cards, and followups. In order to ensure that all parents are on the same page with instructors and pupils, parents can participate in parent-teacher conferences. Fifth, parents can participate in school improvement projects as volunteers. Sixth, parents can assist instructors by informing them of events taking place at home. Teachers and parents can thus collaborate to offer pupils with the finest education possible (Whirledge, 2016).

Furthermore, in the Philippines, in order for students to learn everything they need to know, teachers must actually come up with new ideas. Collaboration with the parents is one of them. Children tend to flourish not just in school but also in life when schools collaborate with families to facilitate learning (Berla, 2017). This study is well-timed and vital as it supports the Department of Education's mandate which is enclosed on DepEd Order No. 54, series of 2009 which emphasizes various PTA activities within the school premises or which involve the school, its personnel or students.

In the context of Davao Oriental division, specifically in the district of Banaybanay, teachers are one of the many dilemmas of teachers is on the development and maintenance of professional partnership with parents especially that not all parents have the capacity to spend time following up their child in school.

There are a number of qualitative studies about parentteacher partnership, however, these focus on the perspectives of parents. A lot of parents do not have sufficient time and resources for them to participate actively in various school activities that may foster parent teacher partnership (Obeta, 2014). This prompted the researcher to propose a qualitative investigation on the experiences of teachers as they participate in the various means of optimizing parent teacher partnership in schools.

2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of secondary school teachers in optimizing parent teacher partnership in school in Banaybanay District, Division of Davao Oriental. These teachers are currently working in public schools in Banaybanay District, Schools of Division of Davao Oriental. Hence, this study aimed to understand and develop in-depth information in exploring the participant's experiences, challenges, and suggestions in optimizing parent teacher partnership in school.

Moreover, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to discover the perspectives of teachers in their optimization and developing appropriate parent teacher partnership in school. Parent-teacher partnership was generally defined as a renewed collaboration between teachers and parents, who must work together in the best interest of students.

Research Questions:

This research was designed to describe the experiences,

challenges, coping strategies and the perspectives of the teachers in optimizing parent teacher partnership in school in Banaybanay district, Division of Davao de Oriental. This study specifically aimed to answer the following questions:

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

3. Methods

This endeavor was qualitative in nature, using a phenomenological approach. In this regard, I followed Creswell (2015) in explaining how a phenomenological inquiry may be used to investigate the lived experiences of several individuals who shared a concept or phenomena. With that stated, I was certain that using a study design to characterize a phenomenon was the most suitable technique for doing my research. In this qualitative research highlighted the teachers' experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights in optimizing parent-teacher partnership in school. All the data were deemed necessary to understand, analyze, interpret, and describe the experiences of teachers in optimizing parent teacher partnership in school among them to set aside biases and preconceived assumptions about human experiences, feelings, and responses to this phenomenon.

I followed some criteria in selecting the participants such as: (a) the participants must be holding a permanent position at least Teacher I in public secondary schools at Banaybanay District, Division of Davao Oriental; (b) these teachers had experienced various challenges in optimizing parent teacher partnership in school; (c) they were composed of either male or female teachers; and (d) they were not members of any ethic minority or Indigenous People (IP) group and are willing to participate in this study. Additionally, these ten participants were for in-depth interview and this number was already enough to provide information with regards to the opportunity to identify and generate the themes.

Data analysis in qualitative research was an intricate and systematic process aimed at extracting meaningful insights from the rich and nuanced information gathered during the research journey. Unlike quantitative research, which dealt with numerical data, qualitative analysis involved the exploration and interpretation of non-numerical data, such as textual, visual, or audio information.

The primary goal was to uncover patterns, themes, and connections within the data, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation. Techniques such as thematic analysis, content analysis, and constant comparative analysis were commonly employed to organize, categorize, and interpret the data. Throughout this analytical process, researchers engaged in a reflexive and iterative approach, continuously refining their interpretations and ensuring that the findings resonated with the context of the study. The significance of robust data analysis in qualitative

research lay in its ability to offer nuanced, contextually rich insights, contributing to a deeper comprehension of the complexities inherent in the researched phenomena.

4. Results and Discussions

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

After analyzing the responses of the participants about their experiences as high school teachers in optimizing parentteacher partnership in school, the following three themes emerged: encountering uncooperative parents, having to deal with parents with different characteristics, and experiencing problems in terms of communication.

1) Encountering Uncooperative Parents

For this theme, teacher-participants shared how they encountered parents who were uncooperative and would not even go to school to check on their children.

Moreover, teachers who supported parental involvement maximized cooperation, reduced hostility, and improved teachers' professional standing from the perspective of parents. Parents of students in the classrooms of teachers who incorporated parent involvement practices into their regular instruction were more aware of the efforts made by teachers, were more knowledgeable about their child's educational plan, and gave teachers higher ratings for their interpersonal skills and overall teaching quality (Godber, 2012).

The initiative made use of the paradigm of overlapping spheres of influence developed by Epstein and her colleagues at the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships in 2017, as well as six methods for family and community involvement. Field studies revealed that in districts that implemented the project, parents became more involved, stronger relationships were developed between parents and teachers, and students' academic achievement increased.

2) Dealing with Parents with Different Characteristics

One important responsibility of a teacher is to interact with parents and update them regarding their child's performance in school. With this, it cannot be avoided that teachers may encounter parents that have a variety of personalities.

Also, parental participation has also been demonstrated to be strongly predicted by parental ideas and perceptions. It has been demonstrated that parental participation levels are predicted by educational objectives and comfort with the institution and its personnel. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that parents' ideas about their parental duties, their capacity to influence their children's education, and their assessments of their kids' schoolrelated interests can predict their involvement at home and at school (Lassiter & Briggs, 2015).

In connection, levels of parental participation are influenced by student and family variables, according to research. Families from lower socioeconomic classes and those where the mother works full-time are typically less interested in their children's education. Additionally, compared to parents of older kids, parents of elementary school students tend to be more interested in their children's education. However, research has found that characteristics other than family income or structure are more

significant predictors of parental participation (Feather, 2016).

3) Experiencing Problems in Terms of Communication

Effective communication is a cornerstone for optimizing parent-teacher partnerships in schools, yet it often encounters significant challenges. Misunderstandings, lack of clarity, and differences in communication styles can hinder the collaboration necessary for fostering student success. These problems can lead to misconceptions about a child's progress, unmet expectations, and reduced parental involvement. Addressing these communication barriers involves fostering open, consistent, and transparent dialogues, leveraging multiple communication channels, and ensuring that both parties are equally informed and engaged. By overcoming these obstacles, schools can create a more supportive and collaborative environment, ultimately enhancing student outcomes and fostering a stronger community.

In line with this, one of the main problems that contributes to an unbalanced relationship between parents and teachers, according to researchers, is communication. Teachers frequently lament that they believe their professionalism is being called into question when parents believe their child's account of the events without considering what the instructor has to say. Teachers become convinced that parents don't value their education and experience as a result of this (Miretzky, 2014).

Many teachers, however, believe that parents don't provide the assistance required to finish home assignments and see this as a lack of interest in their child's education. Teachers also hold the belief that most parents are unable to support their children's education because of their own subpar education. The majority of teachers want parents to support their kids in doing their homework and to give them a location to do it. If the child is to succeed, the ambiguities of these ideas about student learning must be resolved between parents and educators (Crozier, 2019).

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

After analyzing the responses of the participants about the coping mechanisms of teachers in optimizing parent-teacher partnership in school, the following three (3) themes emerged: extending patience in dealing with parents, appreciating parents' efforts, and involving parents with different school activities.

1) Extending Patience in Dealing with Parents

Extending patience in dealing with parents is essential for optimizing parent-teacher partnerships in schools. The dynamics of these relationships often involve navigating diverse expectations, emotional concerns, and varied communication styles, all of which require a calm and understanding approach. Teachers who practice patience can more effectively listen to parents' concerns, address misunderstandings, and build trust. This patient approach helps create a positive, collaborative atmosphere where parents feel valued and respected. In turn, this strengthens the partnership, promotes consistent parental involvement, and supports a unified effort in enhancing the student's educational experience

and overall well-being.

In addition, successful partnerships are collaborative in nature and founded on respect for one another, according to Gettinger and Guetschow (2018). Particularly, family, school partnerships feature shared commitment, responsibility, and accountability for results and are founded on the idea that both parents and teachers are essential for enhancing children's education. Knowing how parents and teachers view this partnership is important given the significance of common understanding for effective partnerships.

The significance of this statement extends beyond the classroom and into educational policy and merits attention from teachers, parents, and administrators. Miretsky (2014) suggests that family-school partnerships cannot be overlooked if we are truly serious about schools being sites of democracy and about encouraging Dewey's interests held in common.

2) Appreciating Parents' Effort

Appreciating parents' efforts is vital for optimizing parentteacher partnerships in schools, as it fosters a sense of mutual respect and collaboration. Recognizing and valuing the contributions parents make, whether through supporting homework, attending meetings, or volunteering, helps build a strong, positive rapport. This appreciation can encourage more active parental involvement, as parents feel their efforts are noticed and impactful. When teachers openly acknowledge and celebrate these contributions, it not only boosts parents' morale but also reinforces a shared commitment to the student's success. Ultimately, this creates a more cohesive and supportive educational environment where both teachers and parents work together harmoniously for the benefit of the students.

A parent who feels appreciated and at ease will voluntarily contribute to the success of a school, yet frequently parents believe teachers discourage and disapprove of parental involvement in school decisions. When parents are treated as visitors by schools, they never feel like they have a true voice that can support a democratic public education. Some schools enhance the separation of home and school by completely eliminating parents from the decision-making process about their children's education. According to Turner (2015), one poll revealed that while 66% of parents believed they were qualified to make judgments about curriculum development and instruction, 76% of administrators believed they lacked the training to do so.

Moreover, a key factor in building strong parent-teacher partnerships is to welcome parents into the classroom to participate in ways that aide their students' literacy development this has proven to show a positive effect on primary grade students (Mahoney et al., 2022). It's important for educators to offer multiple ways for families to be engaged with their students' literacy instruction. Inviting parents and families to attend school hosted literacy events is a great way to foster family literacy engagement (Mahoney et al., 2022).

3) Involving Parents with Different School Activities

Involving parents with different school activities is crucial for optimizing parent-teacher partnerships, as it cultivates a collaborative and inclusive school community. By engaging parents in a variety of school functions, such as classroom volunteering, school events, and extracurricular activities, teachers can foster stronger connections and open lines of communication. This involvement helps parents feel more invested in their child's education and more connected to the school environment. Additionally, it provides teachers with valuable insights into the students' home lives and allows for a more holistic approach to education. Encouraging active parental participation not only enhances the educational experience for students but also strengthens the bond between parents and teachers, leading to a more supportive and dynamic learning community.

According to research by Miretzky (2014), parents believed that instructors were not supportive of parent volunteers, despite the teachers' perception of themselves as being helpful. This study also examined a discrepancy between the favorable attitudes that instructors claimed they had towards parent volunteers and the actual observations made by observers. These observations contrasted with the teachers' opinion that they were actively promoting parental involvement. Parents may experience unease or even a sense of intimidation towards the school, which is likely to restrict their future engagement with the institution or the classroom (McConchie, 2014).

Moreover, the parent-teacher relationship should impact on the child's experience in both the school and the home environment (Shpancer, 2017). A number of studies have confirmed this prediction: parental involvement in children's schooling appears to be associated with a range of positive outcomes, including fewer behavioural problems and better social conduct (Powell et al., 2020), lower dropout rates (McNeal, 2019) and higher student achievement (Powell et al., 2020).

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

After analyzing the responses of the participants about 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.

1) Emphasizing Parental Participation and Involvement

This them displays how the participants give value in parents participation and involvement in school and how those parents who are actively engaged in various school activities is a big help in optimizing the relationship of parents and teachers professionally.

Then, parental involvement in children's schooling has been attracting increasing attention in developmental psychology. The parent-teacher partnership has been identified as having an important role in children's development. Child development can be best conceived within a set of inter-related systems that simultaneously exert their influence on children; thus, the child's development does not depend exclusively on individual factors, but also on the systems of interaction within the child's life environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2017). According to an ecological perspective about human development, the mesosystem created by the links between the child's most proximal socializing contexts - home and school - can facilitate the

child's development by enhancing continuity between his/her life contexts and providing a coherent educational environment.

2) Implementing Proper Methods of Communication

Implementing proper methods of communication is fundamental to optimizing parent-teacher partnerships in schools, as it ensures clarity, consistency, and mutual understanding. Effective communication strategies include using various channels such as emails, newsletters, parentteacher conferences, and digital platforms to keep parents informed and engaged. Tailoring communication to meet the diverse needs of parents, whether through language translation services or accommodating different schedules, also plays a critical role. By prioritizing clear, respectful, and timely communication, teachers can build trust and foster a collaborative environment where parents feel valued and empowered to participate actively in their child's education. This structured approach not only mitigates misunderstandings but also enhances the overall educational experience by aligning the efforts of both parents and teachers toward common goals.

In today's society, schools and parents are responding to increased expectations, economic pressures, and time constraints. In these changing times, effective partnerships between teachers and parents become even more essential to meet the needs of the children they "share." Indeed, Epstein (2015) describes communicating with parents as one of six major types of parent involvement practices critical to establishing strong working relationships between teachers and parents.

Cultivating the teacher-parent relationship is also considered vital to the development of schools as learning communities (Schussler, 2018). Unfortunately, many teachers are not specifically trained in the skills they need to communicate effectively with parents (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2014). Because school communication practices are so fundamental to involving families in the education process, Caspe (2018) suggests that teacher preparation and professional development programs should actively promote the development of communication skills for teachers.

3) Respecting the Community's Diverse Values and Views

Respecting the community's diverse values and views is essential for optimizing parent-teacher partnerships in schools, as it promotes an inclusive and harmonious educational environment. Acknowledging and valuing the rich cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds of families helps to build trust and mutual respect. This approach involves actively listening to parents' perspectives, being sensitive to their unique needs, and incorporating their insights into school policies and practices. By creating a culturally responsive atmosphere, schools can foster a sense of belonging and cooperation among all stakeholders. This respect for diversity not only enriches the educational experience but also strengthens the partnership between parents and teachers, ensuring that every student receives support and understanding tailored to their individual background.

In connection, Friend and Cook (2017) identified several key concepts that determine the success of teacher-parent collaboration. These concepts include realizing collaboration should be voluntary, the need to share resources, being responsible in decision-making, aim toward common goals, acknowledge each other's roles, the ability to work together intuitively to plan a formal program process, and finally trust and respect for each other. It is very important that teachers and parents understand special educational needs and the Individualized Education Programme (IEP) content, and the processes involved in order to work as a team (Mislan, 2019).

Further, research shows that teachers and parents need to collaborate to adjust more effectively to their responsibilities, their roles and their actions to continuously improve students' developmental outcomes (Bateman & Herr, 2016). Welch and Sheridan (2015) add that parents and teachers in collaborative relationships depend on one another equally and reciprocally. The process of "coming together" in education requires a reevaluation and recreation of roles, responsibilities, and relationships. Teachers and parents need to recognize their shared interests and responsibilities for the student and work collaboratively to create better opportunities for the student (Epstein, 2015).

5. Implications and Future Directions

A. Implications

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.

Because families know their children the best, having them participate in the planning and decision-making processes is essential. The participation of the student's family is essential for ensuring that the child gets the proper assistance and that the required adjustments are made in order for the child to be fully integrated in the classroom.

Similarly, the parent is educated on the many phases of growth that their children will go through, as well as the appropriate methods of positive reinforcement for each step. Because of the improvements in communication, parents now feel more comfortable voicing any issues they may have about the procedures followed by the school. The commitment level of the parents to the institution increases.

It has been shown that children's academic success, social competence, and emotional well-being all increase when they have positive interactions with both their parents and their teachers. Both at school and at home, children do better when their parents and teachers collaborate on their education.

B. Future Directions of the Study

It is very necessary to acknowledge the several ways in which teachers' experiences may contribute to the improvement of the parent-teacher collaboration in the school. This section presents recommendations and future directions of the study.

As a researcher, I may suggest intensifying communication, consistency, and collaboration between parents and teachers. Important is communication between home and school. Communication is essential between you and your child's teacher, as it is in any relationship. Consistency is the second component of an effective partnership. This includes the learning opportunities and experiences you provide for your child at home. Collaboration is the third pillar of partnership. Collaboration will be simpler if you communicate frequently and consistently provide learning opportunities for your child. A collaborative and cooperative partnership focuses on specific, positive strategies to assist your child in reaching his or her maximum potential. Planning and problem-solving are forms of collaboration, and they will be crucial when your child requires additional assistance to achieve an objective.

It is possible that further research on parents' and educators' efforts to improve communication and collaboration in the classroom may be conducted in the future. Participating educators in this study might be re-interviewed at a later date to assess how their lives, perspectives, and needs have evolved since they first shared their stories. This would also provide an opportunity to determine whether or not the relevant lessons have evolved.

It is also feasible to have a discussion with a focus group. If data had been collected for this research via the use of focus groups comprised of teachers, parents, and principals, the findings may have been more accurate and reliable.

Because this study relied solely on qualitative phenomenological methods to investigate the experiences of public secondary school teachers in the process of improving parent-teacher relationships, it is recommended that future research of this nature use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in order to obtain results and findings that are more valid and reliable.

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