

# Parental Involvement in Elementary Education: A Phenomenological Study of Parents' Experiences and Perceived Barriers

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## Abstract

Parental involvement plays a critical role in children's academic and socio-emotional development, yet many Filipino parents continue to face barriers that limit their engagement in elementary education. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of parents in supporting their children's learning. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with parent-participants to capture their narratives, which were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. The study generated three major thematic clusters reflecting the realities of parental involvement: (a) Parents' Experiences, which included navigating daily work-school responsibilities, struggling with limited communication from schools, and finding emotional fulfillment in academic support; (b) Parents' Coping Mechanisms, which highlighted reliance on household and community support, adjustments in routines, and the creative use of tools and improvised strategies; and (c) Parents' Insights, which emphasized the importance of strengthened school-home communication, inclusive engagement programs, and the belief that parental involvement is essential to children's holistic growth.

Findings revealed that while parents demonstrate a strong willingness to participate, their ability to engage is shaped by socio-economic constraints, communication gaps, and competing responsibilities. The results affirm the applicability of Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, and Social Capital Theory in explaining how family, school, and community contexts influence parental involvement. The study highlights the need for responsive school communication structures, parent-friendly programs, and collaborative partnerships that recognize diverse household conditions.

Implications point to the need for systemic support from the Department of Education, school leaders, and teachers to foster meaningful and sustainable parental engagement. Recommendations include strengthening communication channels, designing flexible parent programs, and creating supportive school cultures that value family participation. Future research may consider conducting quantitative or mixed-method studies to measure specific predictors of parental involvement and further validate the qualitative findings. Overall, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the lived realities of parents and underscores the importance of context-driven strategies in strengthening school-home partnerships.

**Keywords:** Parental involvement, phenomenology, coping mechanisms, school-home communication, parent experiences, family engagement, elementary education, qualitative research.

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## INTRODUCTION

Parental involvement has long been recognized as a vital contributor to children's academic success, socio-emotional development, and overall school engagement. In the Philippine basic education context, collaboration between the home and school is emphasized in various Department of Education (DepEd) policies, including the School-Home Collaboration Framework, which highlights the shared responsibility of parents, teachers, and school leaders in fostering meaningful learning experiences for children. Despite this recognition, many parents continue to face challenges in actively supporting their children's education due to a wide range of personal, socio-economic, and institutional factors.

In elementary schools, where foundational skills in literacy, numeracy, socio-emotional learning, and values formation are developed, parental involvement is particularly crucial. Research consistently shows that children whose parents participate in school activities, monitor their academic progress, and communicate with teachers demonstrate stronger academic performance, better behavior, and higher motivation. However, the level and quality of parental involvement often vary widely, shaped by diverse circumstances such as work schedules, financial instability, educational attainment, and the parents'

confidence in assisting their children. In communities where economic pressures and demanding livelihoods are realities, many parents, despite their desire to be involved, experience difficulties balancing their responsibilities at home, at work, and within the school community.

The post-pandemic educational landscape has further changed the nature of parental involvement. Remote and modular learning required parents to take on expanded roles as learning facilitators, prompting shifts in home-school communication, expectations, and support mechanisms. While some parents adapted well and discovered effective ways to assist their children, others encountered barriers that limited their engagement. As schools transition back to face-to-face learning, understanding parents' experiences and the challenges they face remains essential for strengthening school-home partnerships, especially in elementary education, where the foundation of lifelong learning begins.

Despite the vast literature on parental involvement, there is still limited qualitative research capturing the lived experiences, emotions, and personal struggles of parents, particularly those in local Philippine communities. Quantitative studies often document the extent of involvement, but fewer explore how parents make sense of their roles, what barriers they encounter, and why their involvement varies. A phenomenological inquiry is therefore appropriate, as it allows the researcher to deeply explore parents' subjective experiences, meanings, and perceptions, providing a rich understanding of their realities.

This study seeks to capture the authentic voices of parents as they navigate their roles in supporting their children's education. Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, the study aims to uncover the essence of parental involvement from the perspective of parents themselves, highlighting both enabling experiences and hindering factors.

By understanding these lived experiences, the research hopes to inform school leaders, teachers, policymakers, and community stakeholders in designing more responsive, inclusive, and supportive strategies to strengthen parental engagement. Ultimately, the study contributes to building a more collaborative and empowering school-home partnership that benefits children's learning and holistic development.

Parental involvement in elementary education remains a pressing concern in many parts of the world, with several countries reporting persistent barriers that hinder effective school-home collaboration.

In the United States, parents in major urban centers such as Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles continue to struggle with active engagement because long work hours and socio-economic pressures limit their ability to participate in school activities or support learning at home (Urban Elementary School Study, 2023).

In Serbia, particularly in cities like Belgrade and Novi Sad, communication gaps between teachers and families have been identified as a major obstacle; unclear communication channels and minimal school-initiated interactions reduce parents' involvement and weaken their connection to their children's schooling (Maksimović & Osmanović, 2022).

Meanwhile, in Mexico, research involving elementary schools in Monterrey and Guadalajara highlights a steady decline in parental involvement as children progress through higher grade levels, which contributes to decreased reading performance and lower academic outcomes among learners (Castro-Maldonado et al., 2024). These international cases demonstrate that parental involvement barriers are not confined to a single region but are experienced across diverse educational systems worldwide.

Recent literature in the Philippines shows that parental involvement in elementary education varies widely across regions due to socio-economic conditions, school contexts, and family circumstances. In Catanauan Districts I and II in Quezon Province, a descriptive-survey study revealed that parental involvement was "greatly evident" in areas such as parenting behaviors, communication, and learning at home, yet parents continued to face barriers related to low educational attainment and health difficulties, which limited their capacity to fully support their children's schooling (Bartolome et al., 2023). In the Christian basic education schools examined by Ablasa (2024), parents across various provinces expressed strong motivation to support learning and showed consistent weekly engagement, but still struggled with balancing work, understanding school expectations, and sustaining effective home-school collaboration, highlighting the need for clearer guidance and structured involvement programs. Meanwhile, in Maragusan East District in Davao de Oro, a correlational study showed high levels of parental involvement and strong academic resilience among Grade 6 learners, with results demonstrating a significant positive relationship between parental participation and learners' perseverance, adaptive help-seeking, and emotional regulation (Tar & Dioso, 2025). Together, these studies illustrate how parental

involvement across Philippine regions is shaped by local socio-economic realities, school communication practices, and parental capacities, reinforcing the importance of context-responsive school-home partnerships to enhance children's academic and socio-emotional outcomes.

In Toril, Davao City, parental involvement in elementary education continues to be shaped by socio-economic pressures and communication challenges that limit parents' ability to participate actively in their children's schooling. A phenomenological study conducted in urban public elementary schools in Davao City, which includes communities such as Toril, revealed that many parents face persistent barriers such as irregular work schedules, labor-intensive occupations, and limited time availability, all of which reduce opportunities to attend school activities and maintain consistent engagement with teachers. Parents reported that even when they wished to support their children academically, inadequate and inconsistent communication from schools made it difficult to understand specific expectations, monitor progress, or join school-initiated programs. The study further emphasized that these challenges are not rooted in a lack of willingness, but in structural constraints that disproportionately affect working-class households in areas like Toril. These findings highlight the need for more flexible school-home communication strategies, parent-friendly scheduling, and targeted support systems to strengthen parental involvement within the Toril educational community.

This study holds significant social value as it addresses a critical component of children's educational success, parental involvement, within the context of local Filipino communities. By exploring parents' lived experiences and the barriers they face in supporting their children's learning, the research produces knowledge that can strengthen school-home collaboration, empower families, and enhance the overall quality of elementary education. The findings will help school leaders and teachers develop more responsive and inclusive strategies for engaging parents, particularly those from marginalized or economically challenged households. This is especially important in communities where parents struggle with work constraints, limited educational background, or insufficient access to school communication channels. Beyond improving academic outcomes, the study contributes to building more supportive learning environments that acknowledge parents as essential partners in children's holistic development. At the societal level, the study provides evidence that can inform DepEd programs, local government initiatives, and community-based interventions aimed at promoting family participation in education. By amplifying the voices of parents and highlighting real structural challenges, the research supports efforts to reduce educational inequity and helps create more empowered, informed, and connected school communities.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of literature and studies relevant to parental involvement in elementary education, focusing on the experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of parents as they navigate their roles in supporting their children's learning. Guided by the objectives of this study, the review examines both local and international research to establish a clear understanding of how parental involvement influences academic outcomes, socio-emotional development, and the overall learning environment. It explores the various barriers that parents encounter, such as socio-economic constraints, communication gaps, and competing responsibilities, as well as the strategies they use to overcome these challenges. The literature further highlights the importance of effective school-home collaboration and the need for inclusive engagement practices that consider diverse family contexts. By synthesizing these themes, the chapter sets the foundation for the current study, underscores existing gaps in scholarly work, and demonstrates the relevance of exploring parents' lived experiences within the Philippine elementary school setting. Through this review, the study situates itself within established knowledge while contributing new insights that can inform educational policy, leadership, and practice.

### Parents' Experience

Parents across the Philippines face the daily struggle of balancing employment, household management, and children's schooling. Ablasa (2024) explains that Filipino parents often manage simultaneous work responsibilities and domestic duties, leaving limited time and energy for academic supervision. This pattern is consistent with global findings showing that parents under high work demands experience reduced capacity to support home learning. For instance, Lau and Lee (2021) found that many parents struggle to facilitate children's learning due to work pressure and fatigue, while Parczewska (2020)

reported that financial strain and time scarcity significantly disrupt parents' ability to maintain regular learning routines at home. Similar results were observed by Dong et al. (2020), who noted that parents often experience stress and difficulty balancing employment with children's online learning needs.

Research by Tar and Dioso (2025) further supports the idea that socio-economic pressures shape parental participation. Their observations align with recent international studies showing that economic constraints and psychosocial stressors strongly influence parents' involvement in education. Prime et al. (2020) emphasize that families with higher financial and emotional burdens experience reduced engagement due to limited bandwidth for school-related tasks. Likewise, Evans et al. (2020) found that parents frequently feel overwhelmed when attempting to balance work-family responsibilities, contributing to decreased consistency in supporting learning. In addition, Andrew et al. (2020) highlight how unequal access to resources and work flexibility affects how much families can assist with learning at home.

These daily realities often leave parents feeling inadequate or frustrated despite their willingness to help. Ablasa (2024) notes that many Filipino parents want to provide more support but feel constrained by time limitations and physical exhaustion. This emotional tension mirrors findings from Gagné et al. (2021), who observed that parents often internalize frustration and self-doubt when they are unable to meet school expectations. Collectively, these studies underscore that parental involvement is shaped not only by personal motivation but also by systemic and economic pressures that restrict what parents can realistically accomplish.

### **Struggling With Limited Access to Learning Information and School Communication**

Communication gaps between schools and families represent one of the most persistent barriers to effective parental involvement. Although Estorgio and Rosil (2024) noted that parents often experience confusion due to inconsistent or unclear communication from schools, similar findings are echoed in recent global literature. Garbe et al. (2020) reported that many parents struggled to assist their children because school announcements were often fragmented, unclear, or released too late to act on. This lack of consistent guidance makes parents feel unprepared and uncertain about how to support academic tasks at home, even when they possess a strong desire to be involved.

Likewise, Ventura-Escote's (2023) observation that parents desire more consistent communication is supported by Kim and Anderson (2020), who emphasized that communication clarity and frequency significantly affect parents' ability to participate in remote learning. Parents who receive incomplete or irregular information often provide inconsistent support, leading to frustration and disengagement. Andrew et al. (2020) also found that unequal access to school information was a major contributor to disparities in home learning, as families without timely updates struggled to follow academic requirements.

Technological limitations further contribute to communication barriers. In many households, digital communication is hindered by unstable connectivity, limited access to devices, or low digital literacy. Lau and Lee (2021) revealed that parents with limited technological skills often fail to receive or interpret school announcements posted on digital platforms. Similarly, Dong, Cao, and Li (2020) observed that even when parents possess mobile devices, inconsistent internet access disrupts their communication with teachers. These barriers are especially common in low-income communities, where families are more likely to rely on prepaid mobile data or shared devices.

Collectively, these studies show that parental involvement is strongly dependent on the quality of school-home communication. When information is unclear, delayed, or inaccessible, parents struggle to understand learning expectations and feel disconnected from their children's education. Effective communication whether digital or traditional is therefore essential to empowering parents and strengthening school-home partnerships.

### **Experiencing Emotional Fulfillment Amid Academic Support**

Despite numerous challenges, many parents express strong emotional fulfillment when supporting their children's academic development. While Olfindo and Belmore (2022) emphasize how Filipino parents feel joy when witnessing their children's progress, similar findings have been consistently reported in recent international research. According to Gagné et al. (2021), parents experience emotional reward when children show academic improvement, which reinforces their motivation to remain involved.

Spinelli et al. (2020) likewise found that positive parent–child interactions during learning activities strengthen emotional bonds and contribute to parents’ sense of competence and satisfaction.

The emotional fulfillment described by Melencion (2023) is echoed in global studies showing that supporting children’s academic activities creates meaningful bonding experiences at home. Evans et al. (2020) reported that parents felt closer to their children when assisting with school tasks, describing these moments as opportunities to better understand their child’s strengths and needs. Lau and Lee (2021) also noted that parents often perceive children’s small academic successes such as reading independently or completing tasks on their own as personally rewarding milestones that validate their involvement. These emotional gains help sustain parents’ willingness to engage, even when faced with exhaustion or limited resources.

Furthermore, emotional fulfillment often encourages parents to deepen their long-term commitment to involvement. Prime, Wade, and Browne (2020) found that when parents witness positive outcomes improved grades, increased confidence, or strengthened family closeness they develop a greater sense of efficacy and are more likely to continue supporting learning at home. Similarly, Gagné et al. (2021) emphasized that emotional satisfaction acts as a protective factor that increases parental resilience amid academic and socio-economic challenges. These findings collectively show that emotional fulfillment plays a crucial role in sustaining parental engagement, forming a positive feedback loop in which involvement leads to emotional reward, which in turn motivates further participation.

### **Parents’ Coping Mechanisms**

#### **Maximizing Household and Community Support Systems**

Parents often rely on extended family members as an effective coping mechanism to manage academic responsibilities. Tar and Dioso (2025) noted that in many Filipino households, older siblings, cousins, and grandparents routinely assist children with school tasks when parents are unavailable. Although this local study has no DOI, it aligns strongly with global evidence showing that families often distribute caregiving roles when educational demands become overwhelming. Evans et al. (2020) found that during periods of increased academic pressure—especially during remote learning—families relied on broader household members to share supervision, lesson guidance, and emotional support. This reflects the collectivist orientation of many communities, where education is maintained through shared responsibility rather than the effort of one individual.

Ablasa (2024) similarly reported that parents frequently turn to household networks for help with assignments or supervision during study time, especially when work hours or limited schooling backgrounds prevent them from providing direct academic assistance. International literature supports this pattern. Gagné et al. (2021) explain that collaborative caregiving within the family enhances learning consistency and reduces parental stress, particularly in households with multiple earners. Spinelli et al. (2020) also observed that when extended family members participate in children’s learning routines, children receive more stable emotional and academic support, which compensates for parents’ limited time and resources.

Beyond the immediate household, community-based networks also play a significant role. Parents often rely on neighbors, co-parents, and peer support systems to clarify assignments, share information, or troubleshoot digital learning difficulties. Prado, Romani, and Almeida (2021) found that informal communication networks such as parent group chats and neighborhood study circles function as alternative channels of academic support, strengthening the collective capacity of families to respond to school expectations. These findings reinforce the idea that coping with academic demands is not an individual struggle but a collaborative process grounded in shared responsibility and community support (Andrew et al., 2020).

Altogether, the evidence shows that extended family and community networks serve as critical buffers that help parents manage academic pressures. This collective approach not only sustains children’s learning but also reflects a culturally embedded system of shared caregiving that enhances parental resilience.

#### **Adjusting Routines and Prioritizing Time for Children’s Learning**

Many parents cope with academic responsibilities by reorganizing their daily routines. Although Melencion (2023) notes that Filipino parents often set aside fixed times each day for study or homework supervision, similar patterns are widely documented in recent global research. Lau and Lee (2021) found

that parents reorganize household tasks, reduce leisure activities, and create structured daily schedules to support their children's learning at home. These intentional adjustments create consistency, especially for children who struggle academically or require additional guidance. Even busy parents modify their routines waking up earlier, condensing household chores, or reallocating evening hours to ensure that educational tasks are accommodated.

Jabar's (2023) observation that such strategies are common among low-income households is supported by multiple international findings. Parczewska (2020) reported that families experiencing financial strain often rely heavily on time management strategies, carving out short but meaningful intervals to assist children despite demanding work schedules. Similarly, Dong, Cao, and Li (2020) found that parents intentionally restructure their daily routines during online learning periods, recognizing that even brief moments of focused support significantly contribute to children's academic progress. These efforts require discipline and sacrifice, reflecting parents' strong motivation to stay engaged in their children's schooling. Moreover, these routine modifications evolve over time as children advance academically or as family circumstances change. According to Gagné et al. (2021), parents frequently adjust schedules in response to shifting academic workloads, new school requirements, or changes in employment conditions. Evans et al. (2020) also found that families continuously recalibrate routines to balance work, caregiving, and educational tasks, demonstrating adaptability in the face of fluctuating responsibilities. These findings underscore that parental involvement is not static but is instead a flexible, dynamic process shaped by children's changing needs and the family's ongoing capacity to adapt.

### **Utilizing Available Tools and Creativity to Support Learning**

Parents increasingly use digital tools such as mobile phones, messaging apps, and online learning materials to cope with academic challenges. While Estorgio and Rosil (2024) observed that parents in urban communities of Davao City rely on mobile phones to communicate with teachers and access school requirements, this trend is also widely supported in global research. Lau and Lee (2021) found that parents frequently use smartphones, messaging applications, and digital platforms to stay updated with school announcements and clarify academic tasks. These tools compensate for the absence of printed modules or textbooks and help parents bridge learning gaps at home. Likewise, Dong, Cao, and Li (2020) reported that parents increasingly rely on online explanations, instructional videos, and educational apps to better understand difficult lessons.

Melencion (2023) also noted parents' creative strategies when teaching children transforming household objects into instructional materials or using games to explain concepts. This type of resourcefulness is echoed by Gagné et al. (2021), who found that parents develop creative, adaptive strategies in response to limited resources or challenging learning environments. Similarly, Spinelli et al. (2020) emphasized that parents engage in innovative teaching practices as a coping mechanism to support their children emotionally and academically, especially during periods of remote learning.

Additionally, parents often combine traditional and digital methods to enhance their children's learning. This blended support includes watching educational videos, sending voice messages to teachers, downloading worksheets online, and participating in group chats with other parents. Prado, Romani, and Almeida (2021) found that these hybrid communication systems strengthen parents' ability to manage school tasks and stay connected with educators. Furthermore, Kim and Drake (2021) revealed that parents' use of both digital tools and offline strategies improves their confidence in supporting children's schoolwork, even when they have limited formal training.

Overall, these findings illustrate the growing digital and creative resourcefulness of parents in navigating academic demands. By integrating modern technologies with traditional techniques, parents are able to compensate for resource shortages, strengthen communication, and provide flexible academic support for their children.

### **Parents' Insights**

#### **Strengthening School-Home Communication as a Foundation of Partnership**

Parents consistently highlight the need for stronger communication channels with teachers. Although Ventura-Escote (2023) noted that parents feel more confident and involved when school communication is clear, regular, and accessible, this finding is strongly supported by recent international studies. Garbe et al. (2020) found that many parents depend heavily on timely information about lessons, deadlines, and

student progress to effectively assist their children at home. When communication is inconsistent or delayed, parents often feel disconnected from the learning process and uncertain about how to fulfill their role.

Estorgio and Rosil's (2024) observation that parents desire more proactive communication from schools aligns with findings by Kim and Anderson (2020), who reported that clear instructions, follow-up messages, and frequent reminders significantly reduce parental confusion and stress. Similarly, Andrew et al. (2020) showed that inequalities in home learning are frequently tied to uneven access to school communication, with parents receiving incomplete or fragmented updates struggling the most. These studies emphasize that when teachers articulate expectations clearly, parents can better align their support with curricular demands, thereby strengthening the school-home partnership.

Parents also believe that communication should be two-way rather than one-directional. They want opportunities to ask questions, clarify instructions, and share concerns without feeling like a burden. This is consistent with findings by Prado, Romani, and Almeida (2021), who highlighted that two-way digital communication channels such as messaging apps and parent chat groups promote stronger relationships, clearer expectations, and more effective collaboration. Lau and Lee (2021) further noted that open communication reduces parental anxiety by ensuring they always have a channel to seek clarification, especially when academic tasks become challenging.

Collectively, the evidence demonstrates that communication is not merely an administrative function but a cornerstone of trust, involvement, and partnership between parents and educators. Strengthening communication systems both digital and interpersonal empowers families, promotes clarity, and supports meaningful parental engagement.

### **Recognizing the Value of Collaborative and Inclusive Parent Engagement Programs**

Parents express that school programs must be inclusive, flexible, and sensitive to their circumstances. Ablasa (2024) found that parents appreciate programs that consider diverse schedules, educational backgrounds, and family structures. Engagement activities that are too rigid or demanding often discourage participation, especially among working parents. Flexible and accessible programs promote greater inclusion.

In Tar and Dioso's (2025) study, parents noted that collaborative efforts between schools and families fostered a stronger learning environment. They felt more valued when schools provided training, orientation sessions, or workshops to help them understand how best to support their children. When schools acknowledge parental needs, engagement becomes more meaningful and sustainable.

Additionally, parents believe that engagement programs should create safe spaces where they feel welcomed and respected. They want schools to recognize their efforts and limitations without judgment. Inclusive programs empower parents and strengthen their confidence in contributing to their children's educational success (Ablasa, 2024). This insight underscores the importance of designing parent programs tailored to local community contexts. Parents emphasized that when schools show openness, empathy, and genuine appreciation for parental efforts, they feel more motivated to participate and more capable of supporting their children. They also expressed that programs must consider cultural norms, work schedules, and socio-economic realities so that participation becomes feasible rather than burdensome. Ultimately, creating inclusive and context-responsive engagement initiatives fosters trust, improves communication, and promotes a stronger sense of partnership between families and the school.

### **Affirming Parental Involvement as Essential to Children's Holistic Growth**

Parents strongly believe that their involvement affects their children's academic performance, emotional health, and character development. Although Olfindo and Belmorro (2022) emphasize that parents view participation as essential not only for improving grades but also for fostering discipline, responsibility, and motivation, similar insights are consistently reported in recent global studies. Lau and Lee (2021) found that parents who actively participate in their children's learning perceive clear improvements in academic confidence and emotional stability. Andrew et al. (2020) further noted that parental presence at home significantly enhances children's engagement and perseverance in school-related tasks.

Tar and Dioso (2025) highlight that parental involvement contributes to learners' resilience and adaptability, particularly when children face academic challenges. This aligns with the findings of Prime, Wade, and Browne (2020), who reported that strong parent-child relationships promote emotional

regulation, coping skills, and overall well-being during stressful learning periods. Similarly, Gagné et al. (2021) found that parents' encouragement and emotional support help children feel secure and capable when confronting academic difficulties, reinforcing long-term resilience.

Parents also view involvement as a long-term investment in their children's holistic development. They believe that consistent parental support builds foundational values such as perseverance, curiosity, and self-regulation—qualities shown in research to influence lifelong learning outcomes. Evans et al. (2020) emphasize that active parental engagement fosters emotional closeness, confidence, and motivation, which translate into stronger learning habits over time. Collectively, these insights reflect parents' understanding that education is a shared family responsibility and that holistic growth is best nurtured through sustained parental involvement across emotional, behavioral, and academic domains.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the lived experiences of parents in supporting their children's learning in elementary education?
2. How do parents cope with the challenges and barriers they encounter while engaging in their children's schooling?
3. What insights do parents offer regarding the improvement of parental involvement and school-home collaboration in elementary education?

### **Synthesis**

The reviewed literature collectively demonstrates that parental involvement in elementary education is influenced by the interaction of socio-economic realities, communication systems, family dynamics, and parents' individual agency. Studies show that although parents desire to support their children's learning, their participation is often shaped by work demands, household responsibilities, and limited time. Research on home-learning contexts during COVID-19, for example, reveals that families across different socio-economic groups struggled to balance employment pressures with the expectations of school-based learning (Andrew et al., 2020; Cluver et al., 2020; Garbe et al., 2020). Despite these challenges, parents often express emotional fulfillment and a strong sense of purpose when assisting their children, demonstrating that parental involvement is not solely behavioral but deeply relational (Spinelli et al., 2020; Lau & Lee, 2021).

Coping mechanisms identified across the literature highlight parents' resilience and adaptability under demanding circumstances. Filipino and international studies alike show that families rely heavily on shared caregiving, extended kin support, and cooperative household routines to sustain children's learning (Prime et al., 2020; Evans et al., 2020). Parents also reorganize schedules, adapt home routines, and utilize digital tools and mobile technologies to compensate for limited school support, demonstrating both flexibility and resourcefulness (Dong et al., 2020; Gagné et al., 2021). These coping practices illustrate that parental involvement persists not because conditions are ideal but because families negotiate structural constraints through collective effort, time management, and creative problem-solving. Across studies, parents also articulate clear insights into how schools can strengthen home-school collaboration. Research emphasizes the importance of transparent, frequent, and responsive communication to enhance parental confidence and clarify academic expectations (Kim & Anderson, 2020; Prado et al., 2021). Parents further advocate for engagement programs that are flexible, culturally responsive, and considerate of diverse work schedules and household conditions (Valls-Bautista et al., 2022). Overall, the literature converges on the understanding that parental involvement is shaped by challenges, coping strategies, and future aspirations—and that schools must adopt inclusive, empathetic, and context-sensitive approaches to meaningfully support families.

### **Theoretical Lens**

Understanding parental involvement in elementary education requires a solid theoretical foundation that explains how families navigate their roles, cope with challenges, and develop insights about supporting their children's learning. Since this study explores parents' lived experiences in balancing home responsibilities, overcoming barriers, and engaging with schools, it is essential to anchor the analysis on theories that highlight the interplay between family, school, community, and broader socio-economic structures. The theories selected by Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence, Bronfenbrenner's

Ecological Systems Theory, and Social Capital Theory offer complementary lenses for examining the contextual, relational, and structural factors that shape parental involvement. These frameworks help illuminate why parents experience challenges such as limited time, unclear communication, and resource constraints; how they cope through household support, routine adjustments, and creative strategies; and why they value strong school–family partnerships. Collectively, these theories guide the interpretation of findings and situate the study within a broader body of research on family engagement and educational development.

#### **Epstein’s Overlapping Spheres of Influence Theory**

Epstein’s theory explains how the family, school, and community function as interconnected spheres that collectively shape a child’s educational experience. These spheres may overlap widely or narrowly depending on communication, shared goals, and collaborative practices among stakeholders. When schools extend effective communication, reach out to families, and create welcoming environments, the overlap increases, making parental involvement stronger, smoother, and more meaningful. This directly relates to the parents’ experiences in your study, especially their struggles with inconsistent communication and unclear expectations from teachers.

The theory strongly supports your coping themes because it argues that parents rely on support systems, family members, peers, and community networks when school structures fail to fully engage them. As Epstein notes, when schools do not maintain consistent communication, families compensate through their own informal networks, which aligns with parents using siblings, relatives, and neighbors to cope with academic demands.

In terms of insights, Epstein highlights that parental involvement thrives when schools intentionally build partnerships. This aligns with the parents’ suggestions in your study for clearer communication, inclusive engagement programs, and more flexible arrangements. Thus, Epstein’s theory provides a foundational lens explaining how strengthening school–family partnerships enhances parental involvement and addresses barriers experienced by parents.

#### **Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory**

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory posits that children’s development is shaped by nested environmental systems: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. For your study, the microsystem (home and school) and mesosystem (the relationship between home and school) are especially relevant. Parents’ experiences, such as work–school balance, household responsibilities, and communication with teachers, occur within these systems and influence their children’s academic journey.

The coping mechanisms of parents fit within the exosystem, which includes economic pressures, parents’ work conditions, community support structures, and access to social resources. When parents reorganize routines, rely on family support, or use digital tools to help their children, they are responding to influences from systems outside their immediate control. Bronfenbrenner’s framework clearly explains why socio-economic situations like job demands or resource limitations sharply impact a parent’s ability to participate in schooling.

Parents’ insights also reflect the macrosystem, involving cultural beliefs about family responsibility, Filipino collectivist values, and societal expectations of schools. Parents consistently believe their involvement contributes to holistic growth, an insight shaped by cultural narratives that emphasize close family ties and shared responsibility for education. This theory, therefore, frames parental involvement as an outcome of multiple interacting systems influencing parents’ experiences, coping strategies, and perspectives. These cultural expectations reinforce the idea that education is not solely the domain of the school but a collective undertaking shared by the family and community. As a result, parents feel a moral and emotional obligation to remain engaged, even when confronted with challenges such as time constraints or limited resources. The influence of the macrosystem helps explain why parental involvement remains strong in Filipino households—because it is rooted not only in academic concerns but also in deeply held values about family unity, interdependence, and the importance of nurturing children’s overall development.

#### **Social Capital Theory (James Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000)**

Social Capital Theory explains how social networks, trust, and relationships provide access to resources that support children’s learning. Coleman highlights that families with strong connections to schools, neighbors, teachers, and community groups have higher social capital, enabling them to help children

succeed academically. In your study, parents who rely on siblings, relatives, peer networks, or parent chat groups are drawing on social capital to cope with limited time, knowledge, or resources.

The theory aligns with parental experiences by illustrating why parents feel disadvantaged when communication is weak. Low social capital occurs when schools fail to provide accessible channels for communication, resulting in parents feeling excluded or uninformed. This matches parents' lived experiences of struggling with unclear school updates and the feeling of being "left out" of the learning process.

Parents' insights also strongly reflect Social Capital Theory. When parents request more inclusive programs, stronger communication, and opportunities for collaboration, they are essentially asking to build more social capital between home and school. By strengthening relationships, trust, and shared expectations, social capital increases, leading to improved parental involvement and better learning outcomes. Thus, Social Capital Theory underscores the importance of networks, trust, and collaboration in addressing barriers and enhancing home-school partnerships.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to deeply explore the lived experiences of parents regarding their involvement in their children's elementary education. This approach is most appropriate for research that seeks to understand personal meanings, emotions, and daily realities as they naturally unfold in participants' lives. Phenomenology enables the researcher to capture subjective dimensions of parental involvement such as fulfillment, stress, cultural expectations, and challenges in balancing work and school responsibilities that cannot be adequately represented through numerical data. As Creswell and Creswell (2021) explain, qualitative inquiry allows researchers to uncover complex social processes and interpret human experiences within real-world contexts. This is crucial in understanding how parents navigate school-home communication, socio-economic constraints, and informal support systems that shape their engagement. Recent studies further emphasize that phenomenology provides a rich, in-depth lens for examining relational dynamics and emotional labor within family life, especially during periods of educational pressure or transition (Gagné et al., 2021; Spinelli et al., 2020). By focusing on the essence of lived experience, this design ensures that parents' voices are authentically represented and analytically interpreted. Ultimately, the phenomenological method strengthens the study by revealing nuanced patterns of motivation, coping, and meaning-making that may be overlooked in quantitative designs.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The study employed a descriptive phenomenological research design, which focuses on describing the essence of participants' lived experiences without imposing external interpretation. This design is applicable when the goal is to give voice to participants and present their perspectives as accurately as possible. Neubauer, Witkop, and Varpio (2021) explain that phenomenology is appropriate for studies exploring how individuals make sense of daily life challenges, relationships, and interactions, making it ideal for examining parental involvement. Likewise, Singh (2022) notes that phenomenology allows educational researchers to uncover the underlying structures of experiences, particularly in topics influenced by emotions, responsibilities, and personal contexts. This design was chosen because it supports an in-depth exploration of parents' experiences, coping strategies, and insights as they navigate school-related responsibilities.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Data were collected using semi-structured in-depth interviews, which allowed parents to share their stories in detail while giving the researcher flexibility to probe, clarify, and explore emerging issues. Semi-structured interviews are widely used in qualitative research because they provide rich, context-specific data and allow participants to speak freely about their experiences (Kallio et al., 2021). Interviews captured key areas of interest such as parental challenges, school communication concerns, emotional aspects of involvement, and coping mechanisms.

To enhance data credibility, field notes and reflexive journaling were used throughout data collection. Field notes documented observations, nonverbal cues, and environmental factors that influenced responses. Reflexive journaling enabled the researcher to acknowledge and bracket personal biases,

ensuring that interpretation remained grounded in participants' narratives. Nowell et al. (2022) support the use of reflexivity and documentation in strengthening credibility, dependability, and transparency in qualitative studies. All interviews were conducted in safe, quiet, and comfortable locations approved by school administrators to ensure participant comfort and confidentiality.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Thematic analysis guided the process of interpreting interview data. Following the updated framework by Braun and Clarke (2021), the analysis involved familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for patterns, reviewing themes, and defining final thematic categories. This method allowed the researcher to systematically identify commonalities and unique variations in parents' experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights. Braun, Clarke, and Weate (2022) emphasize that thematic analysis is flexible and well-suited for phenomenological studies because it highlights meaning-making processes and lived realities.

Coding and theme development occurred iteratively, ensuring that emerging themes were grounded solely in participants' accounts. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to enhance authenticity and minimize researcher bias, as recommended by Byrne (2022). To maintain analytical rigor, all coded segments were continuously compared against raw transcripts. The final themes reflected a coherent structure describing how parents navigated challenges, accessed support systems, and developed insights about strengthening home-school collaboration. This analytical process provided a comprehensive understanding of the core phenomenon under study.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter presents the results of the interviews with parent-participants and discusses the emerging themes based on their lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights regarding their involvement in their children's elementary education. Through thematic analysis, three major thematic clusters surfaced: (A) Parents' Experiences, (B) Parents' Coping Mechanisms, and (C) Parents' Insights. Each cluster contains three themes that represent the shared meanings of parental involvement from the perspective of the participants.

### **A. Themes On Parents' Experiences**

#### **Theme 1: Navigating Daily Realities Between Work and School Responsibilities**

Parents consistently described the difficulty of balancing work obligations, household duties, and academic support for their children. Many participants shared that after long hours of physically demanding labor, they often lacked the energy to assist with homework or supervise learning activities. This aligns with recent studies showing that time poverty, long working hours, and job-related fatigue significantly reduce parents' capacity to engage in learning activities at home (Garbe et al., 2020). Parents working shifting or unpredictable schedules also reported that their routines seldom matched school demands, resulting in irregular involvement—an experience supported by research demonstrating that nonstandard work schedules weaken parental engagement and disrupt home learning routines (Lau & Lee, 2021). Despite these constraints, parents showed strong motivation to remain present whenever possible, indicating that willingness persists even when time is limited.

The findings highlight that parental involvement is deeply shaped by structural and economic realities. Evidence shows that economic hardship and employment-related stress deplete parents' emotional resources, making it difficult for them to provide consistent academic support (Evans et al., 2020). The lived experiences of parents in this study reflect a continual struggle to divide energy between earning a living and supporting their children academically, often leading to guilt and emotional strain. These feelings are consistent with research showing that financial pressure elevates parental stress and diminishes confidence in helping children with schoolwork (Prime et al., 2020).

Overall, these experiences demonstrate that parental involvement cannot be separated from the socioeconomic conditions in which families live. While parents possess a strong desire to support their children's learning, their engagement is frequently limited by work demands, stress, and survival-related responsibilities. This mirrors recent evidence that structural inequalities such as unstable employment, low income, and resource scarcity shape the boundaries of family-school engagement, making involvement a daily negotiation rather than an easy choice (Cluver et al., 2020).

### **Theme 2: Struggling With Limited Access to Learning Information and School Communication**

Parents reported that unclear or inconsistent communication from schools made it difficult for them to guide their children. Many participants shared that messages were sometimes released late, instructions were vague, or important announcements did not reach them. This experience is consistent with evidence showing that parents often struggle to support learning when schools provide incomplete or inconsistent communication, especially during home-based or remote learning (Garbe et al., 2020). Others expressed frustration about not being able to contact teachers or receive timely updates on their children's performance, an issue also noted in studies that found communication barriers were a major stressor for families during school disruptions (Parczewska, 2020).

These communication gaps created confusion and stress, especially when academic requirements accumulated quickly. Parents felt they were "guessing" what teachers expected, creating uncertainty about the quality of assistance they provided. Research shows that when instructions lack clarity, parents experience higher levels of stress, helplessness, and self-doubt, particularly those with limited educational background (Bhamani et al., 2020). Some parents in the study admitted feeling embarrassed to ask repeated questions because they feared being judged, an experience supported by findings that communication anxiety increases when schools do not provide accessible and parent-friendly guidance (Dong et al., 2020).

This finding highlights that communication is a crucial determinant of parental involvement. When schools fail to provide timely, clear, and accessible information, parents face greater difficulty participating in their children's learning. Studies consistently show that effective, responsive communication strengthens school-home collaboration and reduces parental confusion, enabling families to better support academic tasks (Andrew et al., 2020). Strengthening communication systems is therefore essential, as it empowers parents, promotes clarity, and enhances the overall school-home partnership.

### **Theme 3: Experiencing Emotional Fulfillment Amid Academic Support**

Despite the challenges they faced, many parents described deep positive emotions associated with helping their children. They shared that witnessing their children learn new skills, complete assignments, or express appreciation made every effort worthwhile. These experiences are consistent with findings that positive parent-child interactions enhance family well-being and strengthen emotional connections, especially during periods of increased home-based learning (Cluver et al., 2020). Parents viewed their involvement not merely as an obligation but as a meaningful expression of love, care, and commitment to their children's success.

Participants also emphasized that helping with school activities strengthened their bond with their children. Moments spent reviewing lessons or completing assignments became valuable opportunities for connection, allowing them to understand their child's strengths, struggles, and learning preferences. Research supports this, showing that warm and supportive interactions foster closer relationships and greater emotional security within families (Dalton et al., 2020; Spinelli et al., 2020). Parents explained that these emotional rewards often motivated them to remain engaged, even when fatigue, workload, or other personal limitations made involvement difficult.

Overall, this theme highlights the intrinsic value parents attach to their participation in their children's learning. Parental involvement is not only functional but also a source of pride, joy, and emotional fulfillment. Studies demonstrate that positive emotional experiences and nurturing parent-child interactions contribute to resilience, promote healthier relationships, and encourage sustained engagement in learning activities (Gagné et al., 2021; Prime et al., 2020). These findings show that emotional connection is a powerful driver that helps parents remain active partners in their children's education, even in challenging circumstances.

## **Themes On Parents' Coping Mechanisms**

### **Theme 1: Maximizing Household and Community Support Systems**

To manage multiple responsibilities, parents commonly relied on extended family members such as older siblings, grandparents, cousins, and even neighbors. They sought help from relatives who had more time, higher educational attainment, or a better understanding of academic content. Many participants emphasized that this shared support was not merely optional but essential for keeping up with school requirements, especially when parents were occupied with work, house chores, or caregiving duties for

other children. Some also highlighted the usefulness of parent group chats, which served as informal community-based learning hubs where instructions were clarified, deadlines were confirmed, and peer guidance was readily available. This closely reflects research showing that Filipino families often activate broader kinship networks when addressing childcare and educational needs, especially under stressful circumstances (Cluver et al., 2020).

This demonstrates that Filipino families practice a deeply cultural form of collective responsibility in education. The reliance on shared caregiving aligns with well-documented norms of *bayanihan*, *pakikipagkapwa*, and interdependent family structures, wherein family members pool time, effort, and skills to ensure children's well-being. Literature shows that during crises, families who mobilize extended kin demonstrate stronger adaptability, higher resilience, and improved child outcomes because support is distributed across multiple capable caregivers (Prime et al., 2020). This collective approach is not simply a coping mechanism but a structural feature of many Filipino households, where grandparents, siblings, and relatives often participate in children's day-to-day learning and socialization.

Furthermore, these coping strategies illustrate how families compensate for structural constraints such as economic hardship, parental workload, limited digital literacy, and inconsistent school communication. Rather than allowing these barriers to hinder learning, families respond by redistributing educational responsibilities throughout the household, enabling children to receive guidance even when parents themselves are unavailable. This pattern aligns with findings that family collaboration reduces parental stress, enhances parental confidence, strengthens emotional bonds, and promotes children's academic engagement (Spinelli et al., 2020). When networked support is present, learning becomes a shared social process rather than an individual parental burden.

Overall, the extended family system emerges as a critical resource that enhances parents' capacity to support children's academic needs. This highlights how social connectedness, kinship networks, and cultural values serve as powerful buffers against educational challenges. In contexts like the Philippines, where family interconnectedness is a defining societal feature, such collaborative practices play an indispensable role in sustaining children's learning despite significant structural limitations.

### **Theme 2: Adjusting Routines and Prioritizing Time for Children's Learning**

To manage multiple responsibilities, parents commonly relied on extended family members such as older siblings, grandparents, cousins, and even neighbors. This support was not limited to occasional assistance; for many households, the extended family became a central pillar for sustaining learning routines. Parents shared that older siblings frequently supervised homework, grandparents mediated study time, and aunts or uncles helped explain difficult lessons. Several participants mentioned that they intentionally sought help from relatives who had more time, stronger academic backgrounds, or greater confidence navigating school requirements. In situations where no family member could assist, parents often turned to neighbors or friends, demonstrating that academic support became a shared communal task, embedded within the social fabric of the community. These experiences echo findings that families facing high caregiving or workload burdens naturally turn to broader kinship networks to maintain children's learning and emotional stability (Cluver et al., 2020).

Moreover, many parents emphasized the role of group chats, particularly those formed by class advisers or parent committees, which served as informal yet highly effective support networks. Through these online groups, parents exchanged screenshots of instructions, clarified confusing guidelines, reminded one another of deadlines, and shared resources. The collective use of digital communication reinforced a sense of shared responsibility and prevented individuals from feeling isolated. Research shows that social support networks, both offline and online, reduce parental stress, facilitate problem-solving, and create a sense of collective efficacy during periods of home-based learning (Evans et al., 2020). This suggests that Filipino families draw on culturally embedded communal norms while simultaneously adapting to modern forms of communication.

These practices highlight the deeply rooted Filipino cultural values of *bayanihan*, *pakikipagkapwa*, and interdependence, where caregiving and educational responsibilities are distributed among household and community members. Such collective strategies are not mere conveniences; they are essential coping mechanisms that enable parents to navigate structural challenges such as long working hours, economic pressures, digital barriers, and limited instructional clarity from schools. This aligns with evidence showing that extended family systems act as resilience resources, helping families maintain functioning during stress by sharing emotional and instrumental burdens (Prime et al., 2020).

When families rely on distributed caregiving, children benefit from multiple sources of guidance, which can strengthen socio-emotional development and enhance academic continuity. As studies indicate, collaborative caregiving environments promote stability, reduce parent-child conflict, and buffer children from the effects of stress and uncertainty (Spinelli et al., 2020). In the Philippine context, this form of distributed support is further reinforced by cultural expectations that older siblings or relatives play active roles in raising and educating younger children, creating a multigenerational learning ecosystem.

These coping methods show how families compensate for structural constraints by pooling resources through kinship networks and community ties. Rather than relying solely on parents, children receive academic support from a constellation of caring adults and peers. This collectivist approach not only alleviates individual pressure but also strengthens overall family resilience. Research on family resilience supports this, demonstrating that shared caregiving, coordinated support, and strong relational bonds significantly enhance families' ability to adapt to stressors (Masten & Motti-Stefanidi, 2020). Through these communal practices, Filipino families create a robust, culturally grounded system of support that sustains children's learning despite economic and social challenges.

### **Theme 3: Utilizing Available Tools and Creativity to Support Learning**

Parents used mobile phones, messaging apps, videos, and various online resources to cope with the academic demands placed on their children. They reported that these digital tools became essential for clarifying instructions, checking schedules, communicating with teachers, and understanding lessons that were unfamiliar to them. Many parents relied on platforms such as YouTube, Facebook groups, DepEd Commons, and Google Search to access tutorials, simplified explanations, and step-by-step demonstrations. For families with limited digital literacy, learning how to navigate these tools was a challenge, yet they persisted because they saw these resources as indispensable supports for their children's schooling.

Beyond digital tools, parents also demonstrated remarkable creativity by improvising learning materials using household objects such as coins for math, kitchen items for science demonstrations, or hand-drawn diagrams for lessons requiring visual aids. These improvised materials allowed parents to make learning more concrete and relatable, especially when formal learning resources were unavailable. Such creativity reflects a broader pattern observed in global studies, where families under resource constraints adopt "adaptive teaching strategies" to aid children's understanding (Dong et al., 2020).

When uncertain about school content, parents turned to search engines, educational videos, and online forums. This reflects a growing dependence on technology as a substitute for teacher instruction, particularly in households where parents lack confidence in certain subject areas. Studies confirm that parents increasingly rely on digital platforms to supplement their instructional limitations, especially during remote or home-based learning (Lau & Lee, 2021). These practices show that parents were not passive recipients of school instructions but active problem-solvers who sought solutions to match academic expectations.

Overall, these findings highlight the adaptability and initiative of parents. Their engagement is not limited by resource scarcity; instead, it is sustained through creativity, digital resourcefulness, and a strong desire to support their children's education. This reinforces evidence that parental resilience and technological improvisation play critical roles in sustaining learning during periods of limited school support or material constraints (Cluver et al., 2020; Evans et al., 2020). Ultimately, parents demonstrated that meaningful involvement can thrive even in challenging environments, provided that families are empowered to use whatever tools and strategies are available to them.

## **C. Themes On Parents' Insights**

### **Theme 1: Strengthening School-Home Communication as a Foundation of Partnership**

Parents repeatedly emphasized that effective communication is essential for successful involvement in their children's learning. They shared that they often needed clearer instructions, more timely announcements, and more accessible channels for communicating with teachers. When information was delivered clearly, parents described feeling confident, informed, and better able to guide their children. However, when communication was vague, delayed, or inconsistent, parents reported feeling confused, anxious, and disconnected from the learning process. This reflects research showing that transparent, consistent communication from schools strengthens parents' sense of competence and reduces uncertainty when supporting learning at home (Garbe et al., 2020).

Parents also emphasized the importance of receiving regular feedback about their children's academic performance, noting that timely updates would help them identify which areas needed reinforcement. Without such feedback, parents felt they were "operating in the dark," unsure whether their support was appropriate or effective. Studies confirm that continuous formative feedback between schools and families enables parents to deliver more targeted and supportive involvement, improving student outcomes (Kim & Anderson, 2020). Parents in the study suggested that teachers could enhance communication by providing clearer guidelines, using standardized formats for announcements, and responding more promptly to parent inquiries.

These findings affirm that communication is the backbone of strong school-home partnerships. It facilitates collaborative problem-solving, strengthens trust, and empowers parents to take an active role in their children's learning. Evidence shows that effective communication systems, whether through messaging apps, virtual meetings, or digital platforms, help maintain meaningful connections between families and teachers, especially during periods of educational disruption (Valls-Bautista et al., 2022). When schools invest in accessible and responsive communication strategies, parents are more engaged, more confident, and more aligned with the academic expectations set for their children. Ultimately, communication is not just a logistical need but a foundational component of inclusive, functional, and supportive learning ecosystems (Andrew et al., 2020; Gonzales et al., 2021).

### **Theme 2: Recognizing the Value of Collaborative and Inclusive Parent Engagement Programs**

Parents expressed a strong desire for more inclusive school programs that acknowledge the diverse realities of families. They emphasized the need for flexible schedules, clear and simplified instructions, and orientation sessions that explain expectations in parent-friendly language. Such accommodations help parents overcome practical barriers related to irregular work hours, long commutes, and limited educational backgrounds. Research confirms that when schools tailor their programs to fit families' economic and logistical constraints, parent involvement significantly increases (Garbe et al., 2020). When parents feel that school expectations are realistic and considerate of their circumstances, they become more confident in participating in their children's learning.

Parents further shared that they feel more supported when schools design activities that recognize transportation challenges, shift-based jobs, and the varying levels of digital literacy among families. This aligns with literature showing that family engagement improves when schools reduce structural barriers and intentionally adopt flexible, inclusive strategies (Lau & Lee, 2021). Participants in this study noted that such responsiveness from schools enhances their sense of trust and belonging.

Additionally, several parents emphasized the importance of a welcoming and respectful school environment. They expressed that they participate more actively when teachers communicate in approachable, non-judgmental ways. Studies indicate that a positive relational climate where parents feel respected rather than intimidated serves as a strong predictor of sustained engagement and collaboration (Kim & Anderson, 2020). Conversely, when parents perceive judgment or exclusion, they are less likely to attend meetings or engage in school programs.

Overall, this theme illustrates that inclusive, culturally responsive, and collaborative school programs strengthen parents' confidence, self-efficacy, and willingness to participate. Evidence shows that when schools honor family diversity, communicate respectfully, and establish accessible systems, parents feel empowered to support learning (Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). Furthermore, inclusive engagement practices have been shown to elevate parents' sense of agency and improve school-family partnerships, particularly in communities with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds (Mapp & Bergman, 2021). These findings affirm that inclusive programming is not optional—it is foundational to meaningful and equitable parent engagement.

### **Theme 3: Affirming Parental Involvement as Essential to Children's Holistic Growth**

Parents expressed a strong desire for more inclusive school programs that acknowledge the diverse conditions of families. Many explained that their ability to participate is shaped by work schedules, transportation limitations, and varying levels of educational attainment. To feel fully supported, parents preferred school activities with flexible schedules, clear orientations, and instructions that were easy to follow, especially when managing multiple responsibilities at home. These needs are consistent with

research showing that parents engage more effectively when school programs adapt to families' socioeconomic realities and communication preferences (Garbe et al., 2020).

Parents further emphasized the importance of feeling respected, welcomed, and valued by teachers and school staff. Several participants shared that they sometimes felt intimidated or judged during school activities, which discouraged their involvement. Studies confirm that a positive, inclusive school climate significantly increases parental confidence and participation, especially among families who may feel marginalized or overwhelmed by academic expectations (Andrew et al., 2020). When schools take a respectful, empathetic approach, parents are more willing to ask questions, seek clarification, and collaborate with teachers.

Moreover, participants highlighted that schools must consider issues such as long commuting distances, unstable work shifts, and the limited availability of childcare when planning parent activities. Research demonstrates that families are more likely to attend programs that offer flexible meeting times, clear communication, and accessible formats, which reduce logistical burdens and allow diverse parents to participate meaningfully (Evans et al., 2020). Inclusive school-family partnerships, therefore, depend on recognizing diversity not only cultural diversity but also diversity in family circumstances, economic resources, and daily routines.

Overall, the findings affirm that inclusive and collaborative school programs play a vital role in strengthening parents' confidence and ability to participate. When schools recognize the lived realities of families, engage them respectfully, and design activities that are genuinely accessible, parents feel more empowered to support learning. Evidence shows that such inclusive approaches foster deeper trust, improve communication, and enhance children's academic outcomes through stronger family engagement (Prime et al., 2020; Cluver et al., 2020). In this way, inclusivity becomes not just a program feature, but a foundational principle of meaningful school-home partnerships.

## **SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

The findings illustrate that parental involvement is shaped by structural, emotional, and relational factors. Parents face significant challenges, particularly balancing work and understanding school expectations, but they cope through family support, schedule adjustments, and creative strategies. Despite difficulties, parents value involvement and believe it plays a crucial role in their children's holistic development. These themes underscore the importance of strengthening school-family partnerships, enhancing communication, and designing inclusive engagement programs responsive to parents' real-life contexts.

## **Implications and Future Directions**

The findings of the study revealed that parental involvement is shaped by the complex interaction of parents' lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and personal insights about supporting their children's education. Parents encountered challenges related to work schedules, household responsibilities, and limited school communication, yet they demonstrated resilience through adaptive routines, communal support, and creative strategies. These findings imply that parental involvement is not merely an isolated family concern but a shared responsibility influenced by school practices, socio-economic contexts, and cultural expectations. The results also affirm the suitability of the theoretical frameworks used: Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, and Social Capital Theory, as they collectively explain how family, school, and community systems shape parental engagement. The parents' experiences validated these theories by demonstrating how environmental factors, communication structures, and social networks interact to either support or constrain involvement.

The study further implies that strengthening parental involvement requires improving school-home communication, designing more inclusive parent engagement programs, and recognizing the realities of parental workload and socio-economic constraints. The findings show that clear, consistent, and accessible communication from schools significantly enhances parents' confidence and ability to support learning. Similarly, the coping strategies identified highlight that parents have the willingness to participate but need supportive systems that acknowledge their time limitations, educational background, and varying capacities. The insights shared by parents affirm that involvement not only influences academic performance but also contributes to students' emotional security, motivation, and holistic

development, underscoring the importance of creating learning environments that value parent participation as an integral component of school success.

Given these implications, several directions must be considered to enhance parental involvement across educational settings. The Department of Education, as the primary agency, should prioritize policies that institutionalize stronger school-home partnerships, advocate for parent-friendly communication guidelines, and provide support programs for marginalized families. School heads must ensure that communication systems are consistent and accessible, promote inclusive engagement activities, and cultivate a welcoming environment where parents feel valued rather than intimidated. Teachers should adopt more flexible and responsive communication practices, offer clearer academic guidance, and acknowledge the efforts of parents regardless of their socio-economic status. Students stand to benefit from enhanced parental support through improved motivation, academic performance, and emotional well-being, making it important to foster school cultures that encourage family involvement as part of the learning process.

For future researchers, the qualitative findings of this study offer a foundation for further exploration. A quantitative study may be conducted to measure the strength of relationships between specific parental involvement behaviors and academic outcomes, attendance, motivation, or socio-emotional skills. Mixed-method approaches may also deepen understanding by combining measurable indicators with narrative accounts. Future studies may additionally explore parental involvement in diverse contexts such as rural communities, indigenous schools, or highly urbanized environments, as well as examine the role of digital communication platforms in strengthening school-home collaborations. By expanding research on this critical area, future scholars can contribute to more comprehensive strategies that empower families and enhance educational outcomes for all learners.

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