

PARENTS AS STAKEHOLDERS: EXPLORING THEIR ROLES IN SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored the experiences, responsibilities, and engagement of parents in selected integrated schools in Maragusan, Davao de Oro, focusing on their roles in supporting their children's education and participating in school initiatives and policy-making. Using purposive sampling, parents were engaged as primary informants, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. Thematic analysis revealed that parents perceive themselves as partners in educational development, student support, behavioral role models, first teachers, and bridges between students and the school. Their active involvement enhances understanding of educational processes, strengthens confidence, and fosters commitment to their child's success. Challenges such as personal or family-related circumstances, socio-economic and educational factors, and institutional barriers were identified, prompting parents to adopt strategies like prioritizing tasks, balancing responsibilities, collaborating with peers, and leveraging online communication to maintain engagement. The study underscores the importance of inclusive and flexible school structures to support parental participation and offers insights for policies, programs, and future research aimed at strengthening parent-school partnerships and improving educational outcomes.

Keyword: *educational administration, parental engagement, school partnerships, parent responsibilities, educational outcomes, school governance, phenomenological research*

1. TITLE - PARENTS AS STAKEHOLDERS: EXPLORING THEIR ROLES IN SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

School partnerships thrive when parents, educators, and communities move beyond token involvement to genuine collaboration, creating a shared responsibility that transforms education into a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable endeavor. In today's society, dual-income households, single-parent families, and limited time for school engagement reduce opportunities for parents to actively support their children's learning (Hill, 2020) [1]. This decline raises concerns about its impact on students' performance, motivation, and well-being, as parental support had long been linked to positive educational outcomes. Educational institutions, therefore, must strengthen school-home partnerships to ensure that parents remain engaged stakeholders in promoting learners' well-being, happiness, and success (Biesta, 2015) [2].

Globally, parental involvement is a cornerstone of student achievement and school-community collaboration, yet persistent gaps between institutional expectations and authentic parental engagement reveal the urgent need to conceptualize parents' roles as active partners in education. Thus, parents are recognized as vital contributors to children's learning and holistic development, but studies show a recurring disconnect between school rhetoric and parental participation. Also, Smith and Johnson (2021) [3] found that while schools emphasize engagement, many families in the U.S. feel excluded from meaningful decision-making, while in the United Kingdom, efforts to

include parents often remain procedural and lack genuine dialogue and shared responsibility (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014) [4]. Cultural barriers, systemic inequalities, and limited communication channels further hinder authentic collaboration, leaving parents uncertain of their roles and impact. These realities highlight the necessity for educational institutions to re-evaluate and strengthen strategies that empower parents as true partners in fostering learners' academic success and well-being.

In the Philippine educational setting, parents are formally acknowledged as crucial partners in the learning process, especially through initiatives such as Brigada Eskwela and the establishment of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). However, a study by Reyes and Dela Cruz (2022) [5] revealed that participation among Filipino parents remains largely symbolic and uneven. Many parents limit their engagement to volunteering or attending scheduled meetings, often unaware of their potential to influence school programs and policies. The study also found that while the Department of Education advocates inclusive stakeholder involvement, schools vary in how they implement these directives. The absence of consistent support and capacity building leaves many parents hesitant or underprepared to take on more active roles, reflecting a missed opportunity to harness the strength of community in education.

In the same manner, the researcher has observed that many parents show limited participation in school activities and decision-making despite the vital role they play in their children's education. Most parents in the community work on farms, abroad, or in various forms of labor, leaving them with little time to attend meetings or join school programs, while some, even without busy schedules, still choose not to participate and often become the most vocal in expressing complaints while neglecting their responsibilities toward their children's learning. Others remain uncertain about how to extend support to the school, believing that their obligation is limited to sending their children to school and ensuring their care at home. Teachers, meanwhile, expect parents to be more engaged in school affairs, and this mismatch in expectations, compounded by challenges such as lack of transportation, demanding work schedules, or low confidence, makes parental involvement even more difficult. Given these realities, it becomes necessary to examine how parents perceive their roles, to identify the barriers that hinder their active participation, and to explore strategies that will strengthen partnerships between the school and the community in order to foster better learning outcomes for students.

The gap between school expectation and parental involvement mirrors the core concern of understanding how parents perceive their role and how they actually engage in school events and activities and engage school partnerships as stakeholders. In addition, the gap between school expectations and parental involvement mirrors the core concern of understanding how parents perceive their role and how they actually engage in school events and activities and engage school partnerships as stakeholders. This disconnects between institutional intentions and parental realities underscores the need for localized, in-depth inquiry into parents' motivations, barriers, and capacities for collaboration. Addressing this gap would contribute to more context-sensitive school partnership models that are inclusive, empowering, and sustainable for both parents and schools.

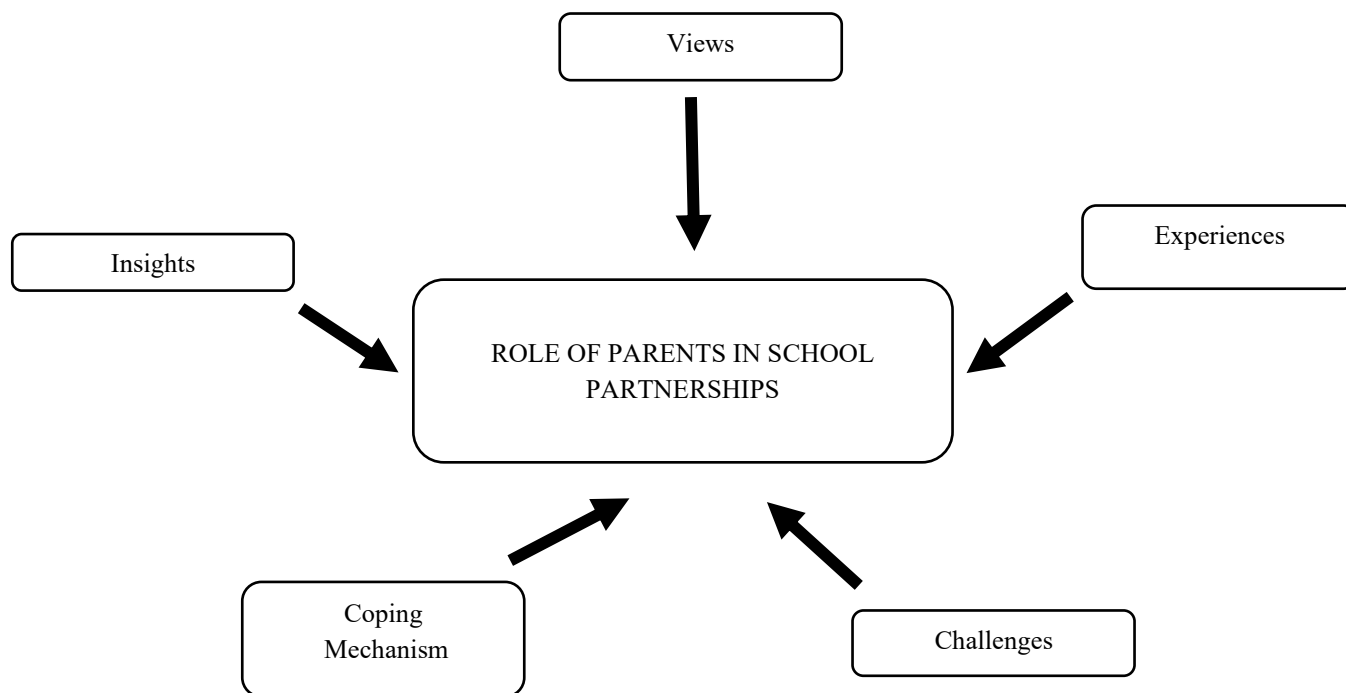
2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to explore and understand the lived experiences and perceptions of parents as vital partners in education, particularly in elementary, high school, and integrated school settings where their roles are crucial to student success and institutional development. Through in-depth interviews (IDI) with nine (9) parent participants, the study would capture authentic explanations of how parents perceive and fulfill their responsibilities in school-related decision-making, the extent and nature of their involvement across different school levels, and the conditions that either support or hinder active engagement. It would further examine the challenges parents face such as socioeconomic constraints, time limitations, and communication gaps as well as the coping mechanisms they adopt to balance family, work, and school participation. Beyond identifying barriers, the study seeks to uncover the insights and reflections parents draw from their involvement, highlighting how they interpret their contributions to building stronger school-community collaborations.

By systematically analyzing these perspectives, struggles, strategies, and insights, the study aims to generate practical and inclusive approaches that recognize parents not merely as supporters but as co-educators and essential stakeholders in fostering effective, collaborative and sustainable school partnerships. By systematically analyzing

these perspectives, struggles, strategies, and reflections, the study aims to generate actionable approaches for strengthening parent–school partnerships and fostering inclusive, collaborative, and sustainable participatory governance in educational institutions.

3. Conceptual Framework



4. Research Questions

The study explored the following research questions:

1. What are the views of parents in their school partnerships?
2. What are the lived experiences of parents in doing their roles in schools partnerships?
3. What challenges do parents face in in doing their roles in school partnerships?
4. What coping mechanisms that parents utilize to address that challenges in doing their roles in school partnership?
5. What insights and personal meanings do parents gain from their experiences in doing their roles in school partnerships?

5. Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This qualitative study was conducted during Academic Year (AY) 2025–2026 in (1) public elementary schools (ES), (1) high schools (HS), and (1) integrated schools (IS) within Maragusan, Davao de Oro, with the primary goal is to explore the roles of parents in school partnerships. Thus, it seeks to examine how parents define and carry out their responsibilities as partners in education, the extent and nature of their involvement in decision-making and policy implementation, and the challenges and enablers that shape their engagement. The study would also investigate the coping mechanisms parents adopt to balance personal, work, and school-related commitments, while drawing insights into practices that strengthen collaboration between families and schools.

Data were gathered from selected parents through interviews and discussions throughout AY 2025–2026, emphasizing lived experiences, perspectives, and contextual realities rather than statistical comparisons. The study would focus solely on Maragusan’s public Elementary school, High school, and Integrated School, excluding private institutions or schools from other municipalities. Findings was analyzed to develop strategies for inclusive and

sustainable school partnerships, aiming to inform local education leaders and provide actionable insights that enhance participatory governance and student success within the community.

This research is delimited to public elementary, high school, and integrated schools in Maragusan, Davao de Oro, during AY 2025–2026, and does not include private educational institutions or other municipalities in the province. It is qualitative in nature, centering on parents' roles, lived experiences, and perceptions rather than statistical analysis or comparative evaluation. While the findings aim to provide context-specific insights into school partnerships, the recommendations are intended primarily for local application and may not be fully generalizable across all school settings in the country.

6. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative phenomenological design, aims to explore and understand the lived experiences of parents as key stakeholders in school partnerships within Maragusan, Davao de Oro, during Academic Year (AY) 2025–2026. Phenomenology, as described by Creswell (2013) [6] and Moustakas (1994) [7], seeks to explore and describe how individuals experience a phenomenon, focusing on the meanings and interpretations they attach to those experiences. This approach is particularly suited for investigating the subjective realities of parents' involvement in educational decision-making and school governance.

The phenomenological design is appropriate because it allows for an in-depth exploration of parents' roles, the challenges they encounter, the coping mechanisms they employ, and the insights they gain from participating in school partnerships. As Creswell (2013) [8] emphasizes, phenomenological research provides a detailed understanding of participants' lived experiences, capturing their views, emotions, and reflections, rather than quantifying behaviors or outcomes.

Data was collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews (IDI) with approximately 9 participants from selected public elementary, high school, and integrated schools in Maragusan. This method enables participants to share their experiences openly while allowing the researcher to probe for deeper insights. The interviews would be audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed thematically, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) [9] framework, to identify patterns, themes, and essences that emerge from the narratives.

The goal of this research is not to generalize findings to a larger population but to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of the phenomenon as experienced by parents in the unique setting of Maragusan's public schools. By applying Creswell's (2013) [10] guidance on phenomenological inquiry, this study seeks to contribute valuable insights into enhancing parent involvement in school partnerships, particularly in rural and underserved communities, and to inform local educational leaders on strategies for fostering inclusive and sustainable participatory governance.

7. Research Respondents

The participants for this study are drawn from among the parents or guardians of students currently enrolled at Katipunan Integrated School in Barangay Katipunan, Tupaz National High School, and Cambagang Elementary School in Maragusan, Davao de Oro. These individuals are considered primary stakeholders whose perspectives are essential in understanding parental roles in school partnerships. The study would focus on parents who have experience participating in school-related activities, such as Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meeting initiatives, or other forms of engagement in school decision-making and collaborative programs. To ensure that participants are information-rich and capable of providing meaningful insights, the principals of the respective schools would recommend parents who meet the study's criteria.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who have at least one child enrolled in the respective school, have attended or participated in at least one school partnership activity within the current or previous academic year, and are willing to engage in an in-depth interview. Parents who have not participated in school partnership activities or who are not directly involved in school governance would be excluded from the study. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences, and this decision would be fully respected.

The study would include nine (9) participants, with the final number determined by data saturation, ensuring that interviews continue until no new themes or significant insights emerge. Efforts would be made to capture a diverse range of perspectives, considering differences in educational background, age, occupation, and level of involvement. Ethical standards such as informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality would be strictly observed throughout the research process.

By focusing on this carefully selected group, the study aims to explore the lived experiences, perceptions, challenges, coping strategies, and insights of parents, providing a nuanced understanding of their roles in fostering effective school partnerships across elementary, high, and integrated schools in a rural public-school context.

8. CONCLUSIONS

This study provided an in-depth exploration of parents' experiences, responsibilities, and engagement within the school system, highlighting the various ways they contribute to their children's education and the wider school community. The findings revealed that parents perceive themselves as partners in educational development, student support, behavioral role models, first teachers, and bridges between students and the school. Their involvement in school initiatives, governance, and policy-making not only enhances their understanding of educational processes but also strengthens their confidence, sense of responsibility, and commitment to their child's success.

Moreover, the study underscored the challenges that parents face, including personal or family-related circumstances, socio-economic and educational factors, and systemic barriers that can limit their participation. Despite these challenges, parents actively adopt strategies to manage time, responsibilities, and collaboration, build networks, and maintain their voice in complex policy matters. The insights gained from this research emphasize the significance of fostering inclusive, supportive, and flexible structures in schools to encourage meaningful parental engagement. Collectively, these findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the crucial role of parents in shaping educational outcomes and the importance of collaborative partnerships between parents and school authorities.

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