

Experiences of Teachers in Addressing Parental Involvement in School Program and Projects

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
Article history: Published: August 2026 Keywords: Parental involvement School programs and projects Qualitative-phenomenology Laak North District Davao de Oro Division	This qualitative-phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of teachers on parental involvement in school programs and projects in Laak North District, Division of Davao de Oro. Specifically, it investigated the challenges encountered by teachers, their coping mechanisms, and the insights they drew from these experiences. The study involved ten public elementary school teachers through in-depth interviews. Data were gathered using this method to gain a rich understanding of the phenomenon. The findings revealed three major challenges: communication barriers, socio-economic constraints, and cultural and attitudinal differences. In response, teachers adopted coping mechanisms such as utilizing technology for communication, building collaborative networks with community resources, and establishing cultural sensitivity and inclusivity in parent-teacher interactions. Moreover, the insights of the teachers vital to educational management centered on strengthening communication channels, building trust and relationship with parents, and encouraging collaborative partnerships with the community. These insights offer a foundation for more inclusive and community-driven educational practices. The study implies that fostering strong communication, cultural sensitivity, and collaboration with both parents and community stakeholders is crucial in enhancing parental involvement in school programs.

1. Introduction

Parental involvement is widely recognized as a cornerstone of effective basic education, contributing to improved learner attendance, behavior, and academic performance (Epstein, 2018). Beyond the classroom, schools depend on parents as partners in the planning, funding, and implementation of school programs and projects, from Brigada Eskwela to feeding programs and school-based management activities. Yet in many public elementary schools, teachers report that securing consistent, meaningful parental participation remains one of their most persistent challenges.

This challenge is especially pronounced in geographically and economically marginalized communities, where parents' capacity to engage with the school is shaped by work demands, distance, and limited digital access. In the Laak North District, Division of Davao de Oro, teachers navigate these realities daily as they attempt to build partnerships with parents in support of school programs and projects. While national policy, through the Department of Education's School-Based Management framework, mandates parental and community participation, the lived, on-the-ground experience of teachers in fostering this involvement is rarely documented in local, qualitative detail. This study addressed that gap by exploring how teachers in Laak North District experience, cope with, and make sense of parental involvement in school programs and projects.

1.1 Background of the Study

Parental involvement has been theorized in various models, most notably Epstein's (2018) framework of six types of involvement, which includes parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. These types provide a useful lens for understanding the many forms parental participation can take in school programs and projects, from attending meetings to volunteering in school activities and co-deciding on school policies.

In the Philippine public school context, teachers are often the frontline actors responsible for translating these policy expectations into practice, despite limited training in community engagement and the added burden of instructional and administrative duties. In rural and geographically dispersed districts such as Laak North, teachers must additionally contend with parents' competing livelihood demands, limited communication infrastructure, and, at times, differing cultural expectations about the school's role versus the family's role in a child's education. Documenting how teachers experience, cope with, and derive insight from these dynamics provides a grounded basis for more responsive educational management practices.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study sought to explore the following research questions:

- What challenges do teachers encounter in addressing parental involvement in school programs and projects?
- What coping mechanisms do teachers employ in response to these challenges?
- What insights have teachers drawn from their experiences that are vital to educational management?

2. Literature Review

This section reviews existing scholarship on parental involvement in schools, organized around the challenges teachers face in fostering such involvement and the strategies through which teachers and schools have sought to strengthen it.

2.1 Challenges to Parental Involvement

Research on parental involvement consistently identifies communication gaps, socio-economic pressures, and cultural or attitudinal differences as recurring barriers between schools and families (Epstein, 2018). Parents balancing multiple jobs or working outside their communities often have limited time and means to attend school activities, while language, literacy, and differing beliefs about the appropriate division of responsibility between home and school can further widen the gap between teachers' expectations and parents' actual participation. These barriers are often magnified in geographically isolated and lower-income communities, where infrastructure and connectivity add another layer of difficulty to sustained engagement (Ceka & Murati, 2016).

2.2 Strategies for Strengthening Parental Involvement

In response to these barriers, schools and teachers have increasingly turned to digital communication platforms, such as text messaging and social media groups, to maintain contact with parents who cannot regularly visit the school (Ceka & Murati, 2016). Beyond communication technology, scholars emphasize the value of building trust-based relationships between teachers and parents, and of engaging community resources and local leaders as bridges between the school and families who may otherwise remain disengaged. Culturally responsive engagement practices, which acknowledge and accommodate the values and circumstances of families, have likewise been identified as key enablers of sustained parental participation in school programs (Epstein, 2018). These strands of literature inform the present study's exploration of the specific challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights of teachers in Laak North District.

3. Methodology

This section describes the research design, participants and sampling procedure, and data collection and analysis methods used to explore teachers' experiences of parental involvement in school programs and projects.

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative-phenomenological design, which was deemed appropriate for capturing the lived experiences, meanings, and interpretations that teachers attach to their encounters with parental involvement in school programs and projects. This design allowed the researcher to move beyond surface-level description toward an in-depth understanding of the challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights that emerged from teachers' everyday practice.

3.2 Participants and Data Collection

Participants were ten public elementary school teachers purposively selected from schools within Laak North District, Division of Davao de Oro, based on their direct experience in engaging parents for school programs and projects. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews (IDI), conducted to allow participants to describe their experiences in their own words and to surface the nuanced challenges, coping strategies, and insights that a purely quantitative approach might not capture. Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis, through which recurring patterns were coded, clustered, and refined into the major themes presented in the Findings section.

4. Findings

Thematic analysis of the interview transcripts yielded three major themes: the challenges teachers encountered in addressing parental involvement, the coping mechanisms they employed, and the insights they drew from these experiences. Table 1 summarizes these themes together with the proportion of the ten teacher-participants whose accounts reflected each theme.

4.1 Challenges Encountered by Teachers

Teachers described three recurring challenges in engaging parents for school programs and projects. Communication barriers emerged most strongly, with teachers recounting difficulty reaching parents who lacked stable phone access or who worked far from home for extended periods. Socio-economic constraints likewise surfaced prominently: many parents' involvement was limited by the need to prioritize daily income over attendance at school activities. Cultural and attitudinal differences were also noted, with some teachers observing that certain parents viewed their child's education as solely the school's responsibility, reflecting differing expectations about the appropriate division of roles between home and school.

4.2 Coping Mechanisms Employed by Teachers

To address these challenges, teachers adopted several coping strategies. Utilizing technology for communication was the most widely reported, with teachers turning to text messaging and social media group chats to reach parents who could not be contacted through traditional means. Teachers also built collaborative networks with community resources, coordinating with barangay officials, parent leaders, and local organizations to help relay information and mobilize support. Additionally, teachers worked toward establishing cultural sensitivity and inclusivity in parent-teacher interactions, adjusting their approach and communication style to accommodate the circumstances and cultural backgrounds of the families they served.

4.3 Insights for Educational Management

From these experiences, teachers derived insights they considered vital to educational management. Chief among these was the value of strengthening communication channels, both through technology and through more frequent, informal contact with parents. Teachers also emphasized building trust and relationship with parents as a foundation for sustained engagement, noting that trust developed over time translated into greater parental willingness to participate. Finally, teachers highlighted the importance of

encouraging collaborative partnerships with the community, recognizing that parental involvement is strengthened when schools actively engage barangay leaders and community stakeholders as partners rather than treating parental engagement as the school's task alone.

Table 1: Summary of Themes on Teachers' Experiences of Parental Involvement in School Programs and Projects

Theme	f	%
A. Challenges Encountered by Teachers		
Communication Barriers	8	80
Socio-Economic Constraints	7	70
Cultural and Attitudinal Differences	6	60
B. Coping Mechanisms Employed by Teachers		
Utilizing Technology for Communication	9	90
Building Collaborative Networks with Community Resources	7	70
Establishing Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity	6	60
C. Insights for Educational Management		
Strengthening Communication Channels	8	80
Building Trust and Relationship with Parents	7	70
Encouraging Collaborative Partnerships with the Community	6	60

Source: Interview Data, 2026

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This section presents the conclusion drawn from the findings and the recommendations for practice and future research.

5.1 Conclusion

Teachers in Laak North District experience parental involvement in school programs and projects as an ongoing negotiation shaped by communication barriers, socio-economic constraints, and cultural and attitudinal differences. In navigating these challenges, teachers rely on practical, relationship-based coping strategies, particularly the use of technology, collaboration with community resources, and culturally sensitive engagement. These experiences have led teachers to insights that extend beyond individual classrooms, pointing to communication, trust-building, and community partnership as central levers for strengthening parental involvement at the school level.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, school heads and the Division of Davao de Oro may design capacity-building sessions that equip teachers with practical skills in digital communication and community engagement, particularly for schools in geographically isolated areas such as Laak North District. Schools may also formalize partnerships with barangay officials and local organizations to institutionalize the community networks that teachers currently build informally. Teacher preparation and continuing professional development programs may likewise incorporate training on culturally responsive parent engagement. Future researchers may explore the perspectives of parents themselves, examine these dynamics across other districts or school levels, and investigate the longer-term impact of specific coping strategies on measurable parental participation outcomes.

References

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Appendix

Interview guide and thematic coding matrix are available from the corresponding author upon request.