Understanding the Critical Role of Parental Involvement Among Learners in Primary Grades During the New Normal: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract:

This research delved into the challenges and opportunities faced by parents of primary-grade learners enrolled at private and public schools in Cebu during the school year 2022-2023. The findings formed the basis for the implications for practice. The research used the qualitative-phenomenological method, with 15 parents in private schools in Cebu City Division and 15 parents in public schools in Cebu Province Division as identified participants in the study. It utilized an interpretative phenomenological analysis with the help of an interview guide questionnaire to determine the lived experiences of the parents during the new normal of education. The results of the study revealed that most parents are trying their best to adapt to the new normal set-up of learning— distance education—and most parents described having problems balancing the obligations of work and teaching their learners, as well as with discipline, enthusiasm, availability, accessibility, and learning outcomes. Findings suggest important implications for practice for parents, learners, teachers, school principals, guidance counselors, administrators, researchers, and future researchers. The study concluded that parents have encountered difficulties and prospects while teaching and supervising their primary-grade learners in distance learning during the new normal. It is recommended that the output be implemented.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, COVID-19, distance learning, challenges, opportunities, Primary grade learners, Qualitative- Phenomenological method, Cebu, Philippines.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many changes in many people's lives through social contact and the loss of other aspects of social activity. The pandemic has changed the way we see and appreciate things. These changes, no matter how hard they were, had turned into what we call the new normal, in effect, the changes in education in which the old practice of schooling had turned into sudden academic shifts and following the safety measures to contain and strain the spread of the virus as the pandemic remains at this time. As the new normal set-up, it also creates additional challenges and unique opportunities for parents to look at it from a different perspective, even though it was unprecedented and no one was prepared.

Distance learning is highly favorable in most countries worldwide in the new normal. Modular Distance Learning (MDL) was the most popular type of distance learning in all public schools in the Philippines due to the learners' uneasy access to internet connections in rural areas. In contrast, online distance learning was the most favorable modality in private schools because of easy internet access and technology.

Further, parental involvement matters in handling primary-grade learners' different alternative modalities. One of the researchers worked in a public school, and based on experience and observation, modular distance learning was one of the most challenging concerns where academic learning was affected. Most parents struggled with primary-grade learners during the new normal before the Department of Education (DepEd) allowed schools to reopen and implement limited face-to-face classes to full face-to-face classes. On the other hand, in the private school where the other researcher is teaching, the school still implements offline and online learning, where learning delivery modes are delivered through Modular Distance Learning (MDL) and online platforms as learning modes. Also, challenges to distance learning in private schools have been identified during the new normal.

Moreover, the Department of Education (DepEd) provided different learning modalities, such as face-to-face, homeschooling, distance learning, and blended learning, in other regions of public and private schools in the Philippines. As much as with the gradual transition from traditional to distance learning, the different learning modalities were implemented to address the need for education to have continuity of learning in the new normal of education.

2. Theoretical Lenses

This research was anchored on Joyce Epstein's Epstein Theory (1990) and Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss's Grounded Theory (1967) in the context of education. It was also grounded on the following legal bases: DepEd Order No. 062, s.2022, known as the 2022 Brigada Eskwela Implementing Guidelines, Deped Order No. 13, s. 2022 or the Omnibus Guidelines on the Regulation of Operations of Parent-Teacher Associations, and DepEd Region Memorandum CLMD No. 143, s. 2022 called the Strengthening Parental Engagement in Education (SPEEd).

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, especially during the new normal, parents play a crucial role in fulfilling their obligations and adapting to innovative approaches and modes of learning. Actively participating in virtual classrooms, using a modular approach, understanding the nuances of online/offline educational platforms, and collaborating with teachers in a digital environment are vital aspects of modern parental responsibility. By embracing and adopting different modalities to support primary-grade learners, parents could facilitate a seamless transition to the new normal, ensuring their children receive a well-rounded education.

Therefore, parental involvement in the new normal goes beyond fulfilling traditional roles; it encompasses a proactive engagement that empowers parents and teachers to create a supportive and effective learning environment for primary-grade learners. This paradigm shift required school leaders to recognize the evolving landscape and actively facilitate communication channels encouraging collaboration between parents and educators. As schools adapt to changing circumstances, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for a child's education becomes paramount, encouraging parents to play an active role in shaping their child's learning experiences at home and within the school community. In doing so, teachers become catalysts for a holistic approach to education, fostering collaborative partnerships extending beyond traditional boundaries and empowering parents to contribute to their child's learning journey actively.

Parental involvement, one of the fundamental keys to a learner's success in education, began in their homes, where a positive outlook on learning was evident. Parents had to clearly understand the reason and purpose of their particular roles to guide their learners effectively. According to Buncag (2022), parental involvement is crucial in determining learners' academic success in conventional educational environments.

This study was anchored on Epstein's theory in the context of education. Joyce Epstein's influential Framework of the Six Types of Involvement (1990) was deemed the best model to use as the basis for this research study. Its emphasis on the significance of relationships between families, schools, and the community to promote a nurturing learning environment for learners emphasized the importance of developing and implementing reasonable procedures(Epstein, 2010). According to Bilton et al. (2018), parent-teacher partnerships are important in the new normal. Epstein's framework identified six types of parent involvement, highlighting the collaborative efforts of families, schools, and communities to support academic success and holistic development in learners.

Parenting. It is viewed as a lifetime responsibility, crucial for learners' academic progress, especially in the new normal of education. Challenges faced by parents, akin to teachers in classrooms, have intensified this role. In the past, teachers could understand learners' family situations more easily(Hornby & Blackwell, 2018). In the current scenario, parents' role as homeschooling teachers facilitates learning. A positive nurturing relationship with parents is considered influential for learners.

Communicating. Effective communication between school and parents is crucial for learners' success in-home or distance learning; increased parental involvement positively impacts academic performance(Scharton, 2019). Volunteering. Parental volunteering is vital for school and community support, involving various activities such as serving in classrooms, providing services, and participating in school events (Yulianti et al., 2022). In addition, it increased participation, which encouraged other parents to do more, and the spirit of volunteerism. Parents and families believed, according to their principles, that the school was more substantial when parents, teachers, and the school worked together (Heinrichs, 2018).

Learning at home. In the new normal, parents play a crucial role in achieving academic goals at home, fostering a love for learning, and supporting learners with activities, homework, and assignments. Distance learning gained popularity as an alternative learning method during the COVID-19 epidemic. In the new normal, parents, like traditional teachers, emphasize values while assisting learners in their tasks, playing a crucial role in instilling morals and ethics. This responsibility extends beyond specific situations and remains integral to daily life(Del Castillo, 2021). Homeschooling gained popularity due to easy access to digital media in the new digital era, especially during pandemics when alternative learning modes became necessary, so individuals turn to this mode of education to ensure continued learning and prevent learners from being left behind during disruptive events such as pandemics (Oyedotun, 2020; Safar, 2018).

Decision-making. Parental decision-making in a learner's schooling significantly impacts their success in education. Parental involvement, recognized as a supportive mechanism, is crucial in determining educational success (DJurišić et al., 2023). As stakeholders in the school community, parents can contribute to decisions made by the school, school boards, panels, and other parent groups.

Collaborating. Active collaboration between parents and schools through parenting activities enhances learners' progress and interest in school activities. Parents' involvement in community initiatives and support programs improves their child's well-being. Collaborative efforts help integrate services, resources, and information within the school's needs, strengthening the connection between the school and parents through various components and activities (adapted). Bonoan et al. (2021) noted that parental support was a noteworthy contribution to learners' academic achievement in a virtual learning setting. Furthermore, it was found that continual observation of learners could lead to improved academic achievement. (Ben Youssef et al., 2022). Moreover, Hsu and Chen (2023) found that parental involvement, specifically in proactive guidance, significantly influences academic performance by preparing learners to access empowering educational experiences and fostering growth and development throughout their academic years.

On the other hand, this study also anchored on the Grounded Theory in the context of education in the new normal. Grounded theory by Glaser (1978), Glaser and Strauss (1967), and Strauss and Corbin (1998), was a methodology that involved the construction of theory about important topics and issues in people's real-life experiences. It was a widely used research method that developed organized, compelling theories from extensive practical study and lived experiences (Lambert, 2019).

Applying lessons from past disasters, researchers explore resilience in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic(Masten & Motti-Stefanidi, 2020). Resilience in systems is defined as the ability to respond effectively to challenges that impact operation, development, or survival. (Sisto et al. (2019) describe resilience as a mechanism fostering adaptation and functioning in the face of imbalance and uncertainty in education.

Parents' resilient mechanisms in the new normal of teaching demonstrated that, to be a teacher to their learners, parents or guardians had to acknowledge the part they played in achieving awareness and acceptance, adapt specific programs using the adaptation process, and continue home activities and actions to guarantee learning continuity notwithstanding pandemic challenges.

Furthermore, the grounded theory also recognized the parent's role in the new normal of handling primary-grade learners as that of a teacher. To be a teacher to their learner, parents had to innately understand these fundamental mechanisms of parental involvement in the new normal of education. Parent recognition was necessary to elevate the understanding to the highest level, as the evident recognition of parental role and responsibility, whether maternal or paternal involvement with the kids. They played a significant role in education, in which the main partners of schools during the new normal shared the responsibility to support a child's education and acquire learning amid distance learning and the new set-up of face-to-face learning. Parents had to have this intensity of eagerness to assist and always be there, even with their conflicting schedules, to monitor and see if the learners were doing well with their school performance, activities, and other school activities. The roles of schools and parents in supporting learners' learning were challenged, which can also be understood from the perspective of parents' resilience (Koskela et al., 2020).

Parental Engagement in Education (SPEEd), family, community, and other stakeholders actively engaged and shared responsibility for developing lifelong learners. RA 9155 Section 1.2 encouraged parents and the community to participate in learner education. Filipino youth education demanded school and parent cooperation. Experts supported research that due to this "epistemic uncertainty" (Kay & King, 2020), homeschooling and remote instruction became more popular, and parental roles in home learning activities were required and needed. Parents and schools had to socialize and educate learners. More robust parental support, more excellent options for tailored education, and a propensity for better-educated parents to homeschool were observed.

Kunzman and Gaither (2020) showed the same general patterns, although there were also significant methodological challenges. Thus, DepEd SOCCSKSARGEN used a region-wide capability-building initiative dubbed the "Strengthening Parental Engagement in Education (SPEEd) Program" to capitalize on parents' home instructional partners. This program offered school facilitator-led parenting workshops to involve parents in their learner's education. Since then, parents and teachers collaborated in education. Involving parents as home teachers in teaching-learning was difficult. Butac (2022) and Hernandez (2022) asserted that parents became vital collaborators with teachers in the educational process due to the decentralization of education from schools. The role of parents as home facilitators was of utmost importance.

3. Materials and Methods

This section presents the research design, respondents, instrument, data gathering procedure, and statistical data treatment.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed the qualitative research method and used thematic analysis to describe the hermeneutic phenomenological design that focuses on the parents' challenges and opportunities as lived experiences in the new normal.(Aspers & Corte, 2019). Qualitative research is the most suitable design of the study, as it seeks to understand the meaning that people have made for themselves, that is, how individuals make sense of their reality and the experiences they have while living in it; in other words, how people construct meaning for themselves and exploration of the event.

This study collected non-numerical data through in-depth one-on-one interviews to describe parents' lived experiences. It emphasized gathering, analyzing, interpreting data, and presenting vignettes to elucidate research problems. The objectives were to explore the challenges, opportunities, and coping strategies of parents handling primary-grade learners with online or face-to-face interviews.

3.2 Participants

This study engaged 15 parents from Golden Success College in Cebu City Division and another 15 from Pinamungajan Central School in Cebu Province Division. These parents of primary school students willingly shared their experiences and ideas regarding parental involvement in the new normal.

3.3 Instruments

In most qualitative research, data are analyzed using thematic analysis, which is one way to identify patterns or find themes related to the research title through participant data (Heriyanto, 2018). Through the researchers' facilitative interaction, a conversational space is created—a place where participants feel safe sharing stories about their experiences and lives (Cypress, 2018).

The interview guide questions, prepared beforehand, are expected to be well-thought-out, focused, and answered with the best of their experience, ensuring that the answers are correct and accurate. The interview schedules can increase the reliability and credibility of the data gathered (Powney & Watts, 2018; Roulston & Choi, 2018). It also uses a "question bank," which is a list of planned, written, open-ended questions related to the research title, with space provided for indicating the answer to each question. The primary data collection was conducted through interviews that consisted of two parts. Part I focused on demographic profiling, including age, gender, number of children, and highest educational attainment, to identify suitable participants. Part II comprised specific questions about challenges and opportunities in handling primary-grade learners, designed based on Epstein's Framework (2019). Interviews were conducted one-on-one or online, recorded for accuracy, and occurred between March 1 and March 30, 2023, in the 2022-2023 school year. Researchers recorded the in-depth interviews with the research participants through voice recording. The longest interview time for parent participants was 20 minutes, while the shortest was 10 minutes. The collected data underwent thematic analysis.

3.4 Gathering of Data

The data collection procedure was formally begun after receiving approval from the thesis committee. The researchers produced a transmittal letter, an invitation letter to participate, and a consent form for the target parent participants' approval. The actual face-to-face or online interview would be facilitated and handled with the help of research assistants. For online interview options, use Zoom or Messenger. Completing the in-depth one-on-one interview would take approximately 15-20 minutes of the participants' time, depending on the interview process.

The parent participants were invited to participate entirely voluntarily by completing the interview under the supervision of the researchers and research assistants. All collected data from the parent participants would be kept confidential and private, ensuring research ethics.

After conducting the interview, researchers transcribed all the qualitative data gathered.

3.5 Treatment of Data

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The qualitative data were collected from the participants through in-depth, one-on-one interviews. This method was used when the qualitative data had open-ended question designs. The thematic analysis was done early, including formulated themes and clustered themes presented. All researchers verified the common themes to confirm coherence in identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of implication for practice within the qualitative data gathered.

The study aimed to contribute valuable insights into the dynamic relationship between parents and primary-grade learners in the new normal, shedding light on the challenges faced and opportunities presented by the evolving educational landscape. During those unprecedented times, the findings informed educational policymakers, school administrators, and educators about strategies to foster effective parental involvement in primary education.

Undertaking and complying with the qualitative research data, the researchers used ethical considerations to ensure confidentiality and research ethics throughout the study as part of the data-gathering procedure.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the data and the themes developed from the profiles, challenges, and opportunities of parental involvement among the parents of the primary grade learners at the private and public schools of Cebu during the school year 2022- 2023. The data was based on the verbatim narratives of the target informants subjected to thematic analysis. There are three parts presented in this chapter. The first part was about the participants' challenges in handling primary-grade learners during the new normal. The second part related to the participants' opportunities to handle the learners. The last part pertains to how the informants cope with the identified challenges.

4.1 Challenges of the Participants in Handling Primary-Grade Learners During the New Normal

This section presents the themes developed for the research participants' narratives relating to their challenges in handling primary-grade learners during the new normal.

1. Balancing Household Work Responsibilities and Teaching. The new role of home tutor was an added role for parents. So, they viewed the new normal in education as burdensome because they had to study the lessons and teach the child at home, which took more of their time. The role of a home tutor added a burden on the parents because they already had lots of work to do at home, taking the children and many more. Informant 1 disclosed one's burden during the health emergencies and narrated that:

"Then you have mountainous work at home. If I were looking for a job, I would have no time to teach or discuss the modular. It was very long, and many questions need to be answered."

Time management was an excellent challenge for Informant 3 when she had to take time to teach her child at home using the module. She disclosed, "For me, *the biggest adjustment to handle my children is to give time for teaching in class and for households."*

Moreover, Informant 10 also struggled to manage her time as a mother and teacher because there was too much work. She revealed these challenges in adopting home-based learning: *"As a working mother, I rely on you to balance work and childcare. Yes, time management. Work, child care, then study."*

One of the hardships the parents faced as active partners in their children's learning activities doing modular learning was balancing the time and energy in doing the tasks at home and teaching the children at home. They expressed that it was crucial to fulfill both roles. In most countries, schools were closed in March 2020 as nations developed lockdown measures to prevent further spread of the virus. While educators transitioned from traditional face-to-face learning to digital platforms for remote teaching, many challenges arose that required quick solutions and changes to policy and procedures to provide equitable and appropriate remote learning to all learners (Huck & Zhang, 2021).

As much as these initiatives were found to be appropriate to address the needs of the time, they also gave a rigid routine to parents who were working from home and simultaneously taking responsibility for ensuring that their children's learning process continued seamlessly during COVID-19 (Bhamani et al., 2020).

Work-life integration is about intertwining or amalgamating work and nonwork spheres per individual choices to live a more wholesome and meaningful life rather than burning out or continually trading off work with life and vice-versa (Odell, 2024). For many participant respondents, school closure and remote schooling presented a struggle to balance responsibilities. Participants frequently expressed concern for various responsibilities, competing for limited resources of time and energy (Garbe et al., 2020).

2. Teaching with Inadequate Knowledge. The parents revealed that taking the role of the teacher amid a home-based learning set-up imposed by the education authorities to curb the fast transmission of the COVID-19 virus was arduous because they lacked the formal education to become competent teachers. Their designation as home tutors strengthened the parents' role as partners in their children's learning despite their limited knowledge as teachers in the different lessons. So, they expressed this tedious and hard-hitting burden.

Informant 2 disclosed that she has to learn the lesson first, as discussed in the self-learning module, before explaining the lesson to her child. However, she was unsure if her understanding was correct. She uttered: "This is the time that we will teach our child; the *hardest is that we don't learn enough about the modular lesson. I will spend more time reading and studying to teach my son correctly in his module. It must be wise because the answer given by my child is not good."*

Informant 4 disclosed that it was tedious to think of the best teaching strategy or approach to teach the child successfully. She narrated, *"The difficult challenge during the modular or online class is to apply a new method of teaching my child because I have less or less knowledge than the teacher."*

Informant 14 disclosed that teaching her child, even if learning materials were provided, was hard work. She shared that: "About the module, sir, as a mom, sir, we are not very good at teaching. We don't understand what the teachers give us to facilitate the children, so it's difficult for us."

The research participant divulged that the new delegated task of taking over the role of the teacher at home was not easy because they needed to be trained as teachers. Also, the parents divulged their limited knowledge of teaching methodologies and approaches that best fit each lesson and the home learning environment. So, they need to possess the right competencies to teach different lessons to their children even though the teacher provided learning materials. COVID-19 affected schools, which led those involved to adjust in unanticipated ways. Teachers felt pressure to keep learners learning at the same pace as before, yet they knew they could not teach or assess in the same way in conventional classroom settings. When they gave assignments, it wasn't easy to know if the learners were doing the activities or just going through them. Some teachers sent detailed daily schedules of activities, while others sent lists of assignments.

Parents and guardians need learning objectives and ways to achieve those goals to tailor the learning for learners. Teachers can be the partners' families' needs by providing information and tools to assess learner progress. However, school closures put more responsibilities on parents' shoulders (Abana, 2021). Insufficient knowledge of parents in content and pedagogy of teaching and the inability to maintain their child's engagement in learning during this pandemic were the major problems for most of the participants (Hernandez, 2022) (Hernandez, 2022).

3. Lack of Knowledge and Inability to Comprehend the Lessons. The home tutors revealed that using the modules to explain the lessons would not be enough. So, they need to research more about the available learning materials related to the lesson on the Internet to explain them to the children.

Informant 1 emphasized that the teacher's capability to explain the lesson cannot equal the ability of the parents to explain the lessons using only the modules. It was disclosed that: "Since the parents have experienced the modularity of our children, they are looking for a way to help them answer the module. Because of the difficulty in explaining the module, the parent can only use a cell phone to research the meaning of the module. The modular policy is not enough for the students to learn as parents do not have enough ability to answer all of the questions. The student does not have a teacher to explain how to answer the module. Because there is no teacher and the child has nothing to learn. The parent is different from the teacher. The parent does not have enough wisdom, but the teacher studies how to teach the children."

Involving the children's learning journey in distance education was difficult for Informant 2, who disclosed, *"The module is because we parent to teach, it's challenging for us to teach a child, ancient lessons and we don't understand how to instruct children."* The limited learning resources in the distance education of the Department of Education led to incomplete learning for the child of informant 15, who disclosed: *"The disadvantage that I see is that my son's learning is limited. It's not like pre-pandemic; my son has learned a lot. The disadvantage of distance learning is that the children's learning is limited. I think it is not effective."*

Despite the parents' time spent learning their children's lessons using the provided learning materials with instructions from the subject teachers, their lack of formal training in child education hindered them from performing their delegated task of teaching the children at home. The narratives of the research participants denote that the remote learning arrangement of the country's educational authorities had many loopholes that hampered educational success at the basic education level. Parental involvement is essential for learner achievement in conventional school set-ups. Parent support has contributed significantly to learners' success in a virtual learning environment (Makrooni, 2019). However, parents should take on new and unfamiliar roles and responsibilities as their learners participate in online education while experiencing increasing instructional responsibility for their children's learning(Garbe et al., 2020).

The rapid increase in COVID-19 cases globally posed a significant challenge among education stakeholders, directly affecting the functional roles of educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers. Different countries formulated educational policies that supported flexible learning modalities to reduce the distressing consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic (Agaton & Cueto, 2021). As the opening of classes ran in the great school year, DepEd adopted the BE-LCP, which permitted multiple learning delivery modalities, including 69 Modular Distance Learning (MDL) and Online Distance Learning (ODL) (Department of Education (DepEd) 2020b). However, parents encountered various challenges from the new learning mode in a virtual setting, including instruction delivery and unsatisfactory learning outcomes.

4. Inadequacy of Time to Supervise Child's Learning. The parents had to effectively arrange their time between family responsibilities and teaching or educating their child despite the limited resources and time.

Informant 5 had high responsibilities at home, and she struggled to fulfill the role of teaching her learners. She shared such a dilemma by saying, "*The greatest obstacle I've encountered is managing my role as a parent and being a teacher to my children. It was my greatest obstacle. I will manage my time doing all the house chores and balancing my problems, stress, and financial problems. It wasn't easy to manage it all.*"

Balancing time was very difficult for the parents, who had to work to provide for the family's needs and take time to tutor the child. Informant 3 disclosed that *" time management is important, sir, because if the parent is busy, the child's studies will not be able to focus."*

Allocating time for all errands after work and tutorial sessions to the child was quite challenging for Informant 7, who divulged such challenge and said, "*The time. As a parent, you still have time because it's different if they are in school, and we have time to do what we need to do within that time frame; it seems like our work is doubled.*"

The parents divulged that it was tough to balance their time studying their children's lessons to teach them, just like a professional teacher in school, because they have work to earn income. Also, when they reach home, they must do many household chores. It can be gleaned from the narratives of the research participants that distance education caused them more burden. So, spending time to study the lessons, provide instructional delivery, and take time to assist the child in doing the requirements was hard to do and fulfill. According to Leonidova et al. (2020), adopting distant learning may result in various obstacles for educators, learners, and parents. This is true even though the educational sector has experience with the methodology and appears ready for it.

According to Budhrani et al. (2021), parents demonstrated a positive mindset while balancing five academic roles: organizing learning, facilitating learning, monitoring learning, motivating learning, nurturing learning, and a sixth role in supporting learning. The role of "supporting learning" was deemed most important and central to the success of the other roles. Parents assumed a primary instructor role as teachers were less prepared and performed activities distinctive to student needs.

4.2 Opportunities of Parental Involvement in Handling Primary-Grade Learners During the New Normal

This section of the manuscript pertains to the themes arising from the research participants' responses on the opportunities for parental involvement in handling primary-grade learners during the new normal.

Parents as Learning Facilitators at Home. The remote or home-based learning system imposed by the educational authorities amid the COVID-19 pandemic intensified or established active parents' involvement in their children's learning activities.

Informant 3 explained that nowadays, parents should be positively involved in their children's learning and disclosed, "The parental involvement for my comprehension is helping my child work like teaching, guiding, and always supporting *their needs."*

The distance learning system requires the parents' direct guidance towards the child while learning the lessons from the teachers' given learning materials. Informant 4 explained, "*In my understanding, for the parent's involvement—more on the child's guidance—we must be on the child's side to guide them."*

The core meaning of parental involvement was imparting knowledge to the child. Informant 12 opined, "Parents' *involvement means that if you are a parent, you have to impart knowledge to the child, so you study their lesson so that the child can also understand what is explained in the modules. So, you make an effort."*

The understanding of Informant 15 about parental involvement in their children's education was about the partnership between the parents and teachers. It was uttered: *"For me, parent's involvement in the new normal of education means that as parents, you still need to guide your child, but that doesn't mean we send them to school. Once they are inside the school, you can't teach them. We, as parents, work hand in hand with the teachers so that our children can grow and learn."*

The parents explained that their perspectives about parental involvement in the new normal were their active participation in their children's learning program and activities outside the traditional classroom activities because the teachers would not provide direct instruction of the lessons. In this way, the parents would act as the teachers at home. This new arrangement requires them to study their children's classes for informal instructional delivery.

Parental involvement is important for the success of any education system. It has improved learner success, decreased truancy and dropout rates, and developed quality education. The Philippine government has acknowledged the essence of parental involvement in education and has taken steps to encourage it.

1. Parents as Guidance and Support Providers. Parents provide more than just the material needs of their children at this age. They also provide positive guidance and constructive discipline so their children will be led to the right path and succeed.

Aside from developing her child's cognitive ability, Informant 4 emphasizes good values and proper conduct. She discloses, "*I am a hands-on mother in teaching and assisting them. I do my best to discipline them, teach good values, protect them, and support their needs."*

Spending time with the children while they study their lessons, have their online classes, and perform their school activities is the essence of parental involvement in the new normal of education. Informant 3 opined, *"Parents should be there to guide and advise their children. Because they are used to seeing their classmates face to face, their parents should have advised them to adjust and embrace changes at a young age because that is also part of getting ready for the future."*

Also, Informant 11 disclosed that it is vital for her as a parent to promote her child's intelligence and proper attitude development. She should "Guide and support the children, to promote interest and attitude towards teaching and learning in the new normal."

Informant 15 further disclosed that parents are responsible for providing complete assistance in their children's learning journey. It was said that " a very great role to portray as a parent is to give full support and enough knowledge should go together."

In distance education, parental involvement was necessary to facilitate the learning process. Parents assumed the responsibility of guiding and supervising their learners through the modular lessons offered to students during remote learning, as stated by (Ramirez et al., 2022). Parents play vital roles and responsibilities in providing proper guidance and inspiration to their children so they will be led to peace, success, and contentment. Also, the correct values and attitudes should be part of the teaching and cognitive-based lessons. In this manner, the parent can affect the holistic development of their children. Every adult caring for children is responsible for guiding, correcting, and socializing them toward appropriate behaviors.

These actions are often called child guidance and discipline. Desirable guidance and discipline are pivotal for learners because they develop how to control self, teach accountability and responsibility, and help them make better choices. The more effective adult caregivers are at encouraging positive child behavior, the less time and effort they will spend correcting misbehavior. Family specialists agree that physical force, threats, and put-downs can interfere with a child's healthy development.

2. Quality Time While Learning Together. Distance education, where the pupils have to stay at home to study, enables the parents to spend quality and productive time with their children.

Bonding with the child at home helped with schoolwork. Hence, teamwork lightened the burden of complying with the subject requirements based on the deadline. Informant 14 shared, *"So we will spend time together doing a simple task."*

Informant 15 had the chance to spend time and work on the school activities together constantly. She disclosed, *"The positive experience I have encountered is that we spent much time bonding with my son."*

Informant 3 spent more time with her child during the teaching sessions at home and shared that she could bond a lot with her children. I teach a lot about the module. And monitoring precisely in all chances that they are in the house only. And I learn on her module adding to my learning."

The home tutorial with the parents and pupils allowed for spending more time, according to Informant 10, who said, *"Spend more time and know each other. I must learn a lot while facing more problems."*

Distance education allows parents and learners to establish a strong bond at home while continuing their educational journey outside the school. Hence, no teachers could provide instructional delivery about the lessons; the parents took time to study their learner's lessons using the learning materials supplemented by available online learning resources.

With the strong bond between the parent and the child, the successful education of the young learners was achieved despite the trying times of the pandemic. Building positive relationships with families formed the foundation of learner success (Zheng, 2022).

3. Time and Money-Saving Learning Scheme. In the distance learning arrangements, the children were not required to go physically to school, so the parents could save money on the fare, food allowance, and other school-related expenses.

Informant 2 disclosed that with home-based learning, the parents and the pupils were not pressured to wake up early to go to school, so both time and transportation costs were saved. She divulged this by saying, *"The first benefit of distance learning is that it saves time since you don't have to prepare for getting up and going to school. Save your effort."*

Informant 4 said that she could save money for transportation and food for her child because the learning was done at home. She disclosed that: *"During modular or online classes, I save money for fare and snacks, and my children are safe,"*

Likewise, Informant 12 was also able to save money for the fare and snacks of her grade one pupil because physical classes were suspended. She narrated, "The benefits are I can save money for the fare every day and for snacks."

Informant 14 revealed that sending and fetching her child to school was less hassle, which saved her time and energy. Likewise, the money spent was less than for face-to-face classes. It was uttered that, "As a parent, it would not be a hassle to send my child to school. Our expenses are less."

The advantage of this learning set-up was that the children or learners had to stay at home, and they would attend classes online or study using the self-learning modules provided by the school. Hence, there were no transportation costs, allowance, and other expenses on the part of the parents. Traditional education was expensive and time-consuming. The cost of conventional education was much higher than that of online learning. It involved a lot of manual work and extra expenses for hiring teachers, purchasing school supplies, and buying books. Online learning did not have these costs associated with it. Online learning could be done from home or the office without extra expenses.(Selvaraj et al., 2021)

4.3 Ways of Coping These Identified Challenges

This section presents themes derived from the parents' narratives regarding their coping mechanisms and the challenges they faced as they were involved in educating their children through distance and blended learning.

1. Time Management. With the added responsibility of being proactive in the children's learning activities at home. The parents should intensify their time management skills so that they would be able to fulfill their tasks and duties properly.

Informant 2 made a schedule to be followed to ensure that there is time for studying, doing school tasks, and other activities. She opined, *"There is a schedule that the children should follow to monitor the children and teach the module. Everything is planned, and there is time management."*

Informant 12 accepted that the people's environment, situation, and life have changed due to the emergence of health. So, she has to fit into the change in 97 the educational system of her child. She just thought of adjusting her schedule to attend to her new role. She discoursed that: *"It's just time management, sir. You must adjust because we can't stop what will happen; they call it change."*

Also, Informant 10 prioritized teaching her child over other family duties. She disclosed, *"I prioritize my children's learning, give them time, and have time management, which is also very important."*

The parents must manage their time correctly to perform their duties and responsibilities for their job (if working), for their family, and in the new role of being home teachers for the kids having distance learning arrangements amid the suspension of physical classes.

Many learners are overwhelmed by the prospect of fitting everything they have and want to do into the few short hours after school. There is much to do between homework, activities, and just time to play. Nevertheless, even though most learners do not have the thinking cognitive skills to organize their schedules independently until middle school, parents can start teaching their learners how to plan and prioritize their time early. It is true that when young learners are taught strategies for time management at an early age, they internalize them more efficiently, eventually setting them up for lifelong success.

2. Power of Acceptance and Positive Thinking. The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic is too big for a single person to handle. Hence, acceptance and optimism are the ways to cope with the drastic changes in life's flow.

Being optimistic is the key to living with the current situation despite the odds and challenges. Informant 1 revealed, *"So what we do is that we don't have a choice; we just accept."*

Embracing the situation and thinking that there is a better solution from the authorities was done by Informant 4 disclosed: "And as a parent, I embrace the situation not only at the beginning but let's move on with what the government is doing. Let's follow the implementations."

Also, being pessimistic is one of the best ways to approach the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Informant 5 disclosed, *"Always think positive in life, proper balancing of time."*

Being optimistic in the face of stressful situations in the new normal helped Informant 10. It was disclosed that: "As a parent, the way to cope with all challenges in distance learning is always a positive mind."

Informant 15 thought the current problem had come to pass since nothing would last forever, including the crisis. It was narrated by saying*: "Not everything is permanent, and the only thing that changes is that it changes. So, as a parent, there is nothing else you can do; you have to accept and adapt to face it fully and find a solution to what I said before: change is inevitable, so you have to embrace it."*

The parents revealed that they could face the change in their lives, including their role in their children's education, through optimism, acceptance, and embracing the situation. They tend to be resilient to the crucial societal issues that affect them because they think they cannot do anything about it or stop the situation from happening. So, they used their fighting spirit to survive. The parents' acceptance and embracing of the epidemic's impacts is a method for them to signal to their children that they are in control of the continuation of their education and are responsible for it. Changes are inevitable, and we must learn to accept them to cope with all the challenges (Brom et al., 2020).

Likewise, higher optimism, one form of trait anticipation, was related to higher state positive anticipation, which was related to higher positive emotions during the current episode, which persisted to the next. In addition, optimism and state-positive anticipation were related to adaptive responses to the pandemic.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concluded that parents have encountered difficulties and prospects while teaching and supervising their primary-grade learners in distance learning during the new normal. Certain aspects that pose difficulties include parental inadequacy in providing instruction at home and challenges in effectively managing time. Notwithstanding, parents can address these challenges through effective problem-solving strategies, thereby presenting significant prospects for parents, learners, and teachers. In turn, this can significantly impact the overall standard of distance learning by fostering involvement and delivering a superior educational outcome. It is recommended that the action plan be implemented.

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