

Programs and Activities in a Rural Primary school in the Philippines: A Qualitative Inquiry on Parents' Perspective

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Abstract

The study investigated parents' perspectives in education, school programs, and activities in a state-run primary school in the Philippines. The study utilized the qualitative research design. The study participants are the fifteen parents of the pupils in the primary school in the rural area in Cebu, Philippines. They are purposively selected with data saturation as the basis in determining the number of participants. After collated data, transcribed it, and thematic analysis and coding were used to analyze the data gathered. Five themes that emerged in the study: Education is Essential, Parent support is crucial to the success of the pupil, Socio-economic obligation/responsibilities, Timeliness of school activities and programs, Opportunities, and direction for involvement. The finding suggests that the school needs to empower parents to become more active in the school and their children's education. The study recommends that the school implement a culturally based program consisting of the reward system, the livelihood program, the responsible parenthood program, and the alternative learning system program.

Keywords: Parents' involvement, Perspective, Cultural-based program, School programs and activities, Basic education institution

1. Introduction

The Philippine Government, through its Presidential Decree No. 603 on Child and Youth Welfare Code, (603), states the general duties of parents towards their children. As defined by the Directional Plan of the Philippines Commission on Population, "responsible parenthood is the will and ability of the parents to respond to the needs and aspirations of the family." (Health, 2017). Thus, parents' support is vital to the success of the children.

According to (Miller-Wilson, 2010), parenting behaviors can have serious adverse effects on children. One of the common parenting mistakes is the lack of Parent Involvement (PI) in school activities. According to a study published in the Journal of Development (2012), parent's involvement in school activities plays a crucial role in the child's development as it associates with more positive academic performance and social competence in children. In addition, a child's experience of schooling often depends on the connection between his family and social environment.

School academic performance is crucial because it sets the tone of how these children are prepared to behave harmoniously in the civilized world. When schools work together with families, it supports learning, and children tend to succeed not just in school but throughout life. But one critical issue in the school today is to involve uncooperative parents in the school process actively. What should be done differently to increase parents' involvement in school programs and activities? Although less educated parents are often found to have been neglectful towards their duties, however many are actively involved. They have been supporting the school activities, which most of the school personnel wonder and suspect that these parents were not caring about their children's education. In addition, Gaetano De (2007) said that many school personnel talks about wanting some sort of increased parental involvement in the schools. Still, they lament what they perceive as a lack of parental caring, particularly by parents of poor.

Collaboration between parents and teachers is an essential step towards students' achievement as much as school acknowledges the need for parents to work as equal partners in its students' success. The importance of parental involvement in children's academic and social development is very crucial. For it is an indicator of later school successes. Research had shown that parents' participation in school activities has substantial benefits that could contribute to more significant gains in academic achievement and enhanced emotional development and behavior in children. (Baker, Wise, Kelly, & Skiba, 2016). Kimaru (2015) study showed a significant positive relationship between parental involvement in school activities and children's academic standing.

The education sector is trying to encourage parents' involvement in school programs and other school-related activities. One primary factor that needs to look into children's educational successes is the parents' interest and support. A study conducted by (Baker, Wise, Kelly, & Skiba, 2016) showed that Parent involvement activities such as volunteering had increased the relationship among parents and teachers, resulting in more trust and respect, thus providing more support for student success.

Despite emphasizing the importance of parent involvement in schools' functions and related activities, different understandings exist for parents' involvement. Its essence is the foundation for school authorities to create school programs and policies that would aptly address this need (Hilado, Kallemeyn, & Philipps, 2013). It is important to note that schools should know first how parents view their role in supporting their children's schooling. By identifying these barriers, the academe could work on programs to actively involve and engage parents in school programs and school related-activities.

This phenomenon is ripe for a qualitative inquiry whose intense, deep exchange and evaluation of ideas can add texture and color to the picture under investigation. With this in mind, how can we encourage/motivate parents to participate in the school programs and activities actively?

Research questions

The study aimed to describe and understand parents' perspectives on school programs and activities.

This study specifically sought to investigate the following:

1. Why do some parents are not active in school programs and activities?
2. How did they view school programs and activities?
3. What challenges do parents face in engaging school programs and activities?

2. Methods And Materials

Research Design

This study is primarily a qualitative research design based on individual in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions with the selected parent of the pupils in public Elementary School. This study aimed to investigate and understand parents' perspectives in education, school programs, and activities.

Research Environment

The study was conducted in a public elementary school located in a mountainous area in Cebu, Philippines. The place is characterized as farmland, where most families belong to the least privileged group of the society. Yet, it is worthy to note that the school has produced several performing pupils who graduated with flying colors and eventually became successful professionals.

Programs and Activities in a Rural Primary school in the Philippines: A Qualitative Inquiry on Parents' Perspective

Research informants/Sampling Frame

The fifteen informants of this study were parents of the pupils in public elementary school in Cebu, Philippines. They are purposively selected to be part of the study because it aims to described parents' perspectives on the school programs and activities. The study stopped sampling at fifteen informants because it reaches data saturation. It means there are no additional themes and sub-themes that emerged from the succeeding interviews. The inclusion criteria were based on the following: (a) Mother or father or legal guardian of an elementary pupil in a public school, (b) Nonparticipative in school programs and activities of their children, and (c) willing to participate in the study.

Ethical Consideration

To preserve and protect the ethical standards in conducting research, the researcher called for an individual conference with each of the fifteen participants. Discussed with them the rationale of the research study and disclosed to them all information regarding the research study. It includes presenting research information to the participants, such as the content and basis of conducting the study, the reasons they are chosen as participants of the study, the possible benefits and burdens of participating. Moreover, we informed them that withdrawal from the participation of the study at any time is possible, and participation is voluntary. During the interviews, if a participant did not feel like responding to any particular questions, he or she had the right to say so. Guaranteed them that their identities are protected throughout the study by using fictitious/pseudo names, and any information they revealed is treated with high respect and confidentially. Moreover, participants are assured if they want to know about the results/findings of the study is provided to them. The participants are also given ample time to consider or decide whether to take part/not in the research, and lastly, let the participants signed and have a copy of a consent document.

Gathering of Data

Before the initiation of each interview, targeted participants received a consent form. After the consent form was signed and approved by the informants, the researcher made the interview schedule for each participant. The researchers scheduled All interviews and occurred in a private, quiet area of the informant's house or at a place convenient to the participant. In addition, individual in-depth interviews were done with fifteen parents in a private setting and confidential. Moreover, the researcher informed the participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. The interviews were tape-recorded, and each interview lasted for 25–30 mins on average. Data were collected through tape-recording in one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions with parents of elementary pupils. Soon after completion, the interviews were transcribed verbatim into vernacular and then translated into English. Maintain confidentiality of the subjects throughout the study by identifying them by using fictitious names so that only the researcher could identify the informants.

Data Analysis

Data were gathered through observation, in-deep individual interviews, and focus group discussion. Interview transcripts were analyzed using a phenomenological methodology. The analysis was conducted through the following steps: detailed reading and interpreting of transcripts to identify initial themes or codes; defining and redefining of codes; modifying of codes through comparing and contrasting and formulating themes as the expression of the latent content of the text.

TABLE 1 Participants' Demographic Information

Participant	Gender	Age	Educational Level	Occupation	No. of School Age Children
1	female	34	Grade 1	Housewife	3
2	female	30	Grade 6	Housewife	4
3	female	30	2 nd Year High school	Housewife	2
4	female	41	Grade 6	laborer	2
5	female	35	High school level	Laborer	4
6	Male	35	Grade 5	Labor	2

7	female	39	Grade 5	housewife	7
8	female	28	3 rd yr. high school	housewife	1
9	female	32	High sch grad	housewife	2
10	Female	44	Grade 5	Housewife	5
11	female	50	Grade 3	housewife	4
12	female	43	Grade 6	housewife	3
13	female	38	2 nd College	housewife	2
14	female	28	1st Year High school	housewife	1
15	female	35	1 st Year College	housewife	4

Table I presented the demographic profile of the parents who have participated in the interview and focus group discussions. Based on the profile, that 44% of the parents are having the elementary level as their highest educational attainment while another 44% have the high school level as their highest educational attainment, and only 2% of the parents went to college. Thus, it can be said that the educational attainment of the parents is not high. This means that the school has to establish a clear and comprehensible program to follow and abide. It should be done in a way that it is understandable, amenable, and acceptable, especially to the parents. According to (Baker, Wise, Kelly, & Skiba, 2016), it is frustrating and difficult for parents who don't have a higher education level to assist their child with no knowledge themselves.

3. Results

There are five themes generated in the study namely, (1) Education is essential, (2) parental support is crucial to the child, (3) Socio-economic obligations and/or responsibilities, (4) Timelines of school activities and programs, and (5) Opportunities and direction for involvement.

Theme 1: Education is essential in life

The parents' who participated in the study have viewed education as important element to their children lives. It is essential because of their experience; life with no education is difficult because opportunities for them were limited, consequently affecting their way of living.

As one parent uttered,

“Pait kaayo mam ang walay grado mao na akong kinabuhi, akong anak dili ko gusto ma pariha nako mam mao importante jud ang pagpa edukar sa mga bata.”

“It is tough for one's life if one doesn't have an education. I don't like my children to be like me.”

“Another parent said,

“Kaayohan sa bata mam ang dunay grado mam mao ingon ana ka importante ang edukasyon.”

It is for the children's welfare to have an education; that is why I viewed education as very important.”

Parents claim that education is essential and is supported by enrolling their school children as young as four years old. Though it's hard to see their children undergo training so early, sending them to school while still very young has substantial benefits. As a mother said,

“Adunay makat onan samtang bata pa kay sa balay wala siyay makat onan mas mayo nga atua sya sa skwelahan.”

“There is learning if the child is sent to school early, it is better for the child should stay in school rather than at home.”

One parent acknowledged the need to send the children to school in their early years to form and learn good things that will form part of being a good person in the future.

Programs and Activities in a Rural Primary school in the Philippines: A Qualitative Inquiry on Parents' Perspective

Theme 2: Parental support is crucial to the success of the child.

“Kay naka kuha manko gud ug leksyon mam kay ang akong mama kuwang ug suporta kay kun nisuporta pa akong mama nahuman jud tingayi ko mam.”

“I have learned from my experience because my mother lacked support on my studies. Had she supported me, I would surely have finished.”

Another parent expressed

“Importante jud nga motambong sa tanang kalihokan sa mga bata sa skwelahan para ang mga bata dili maka sulti nga wala man gani magpakabana si mama aw dili nalang pod ko moadto.”

“It is important for parents to attend to school-related functions so that children could not say that if mama did not care to attend, why should I?”

Another parent even told the interviewer that she is very supportive of her children's schooling because she would not want her children to suffer the same fate. Parents have expressed their sentiment of how important for them to support the education of their children. Since education is essential, they view the idea of helping their children as crucial because it is equivalent to having a promising future. According to them, supporting is about preparing their children's future. Having an education is a valuable thing they can give to their children.

Theme 3: Socio-economic obligations and responsibilities

“Maibog ko mam uy anang ubang ginikanan kay wala silay bikil maka yano yano dayon sila adto sa skwelahan, ako buot moadto pero walay kabinlan sa bata magaid ko mam.”

“I envy other parents because they are not occupied with, they can readily go to school in as much as I wanted to, but I don't have anybody to leave my child under care.”

“Wala jud time moadto sa skwelahan kay tungod sa panginabuhian, abag sa bana mam kay wala unya toy kita akong bana mam, wala mi pamo bugas.”

“I don't have time to go to school because of economic reasons. I have to support my husband; what if he has no income? We won't have something to eat.”

One parent said,

“Duna jud mga panahon nga dili ko maka tambong sa mga kalihokan sa skwelahan tungod magaid ko sa panginabuhay kay mag hunahuna naman pod ko unsay ipabawn sa mga bata igka ugma.”

” There are times really that I could not attend school functions because of I am thinking of the next day's expenses of my children.”

Theme 4: Timelines of school activities and programs

The fourth theme is about the schedule of programs and activities. Parents expressed their concern to have a schedule of activities disseminated in advance. Parents expressed their concern that sometimes they can't attend school-related functions because they received the information late and can't catch up with the scheduled school programs.

“Gusto unta nako mam kun magpatawag ug para kalihokan kana unta nga aduna pay dako nga time ipangandam namo kanang dili apiki.”

“If we are called to go or report to a school, I prefer that we are informed way ahead of time so we can prepare.”

Another parent said,

“Usahay pod mam dili mi maka tambong ug kalihokan diri sa skwelahan tungod kay duna pod magkadungan nga meting sa laing skwelahan sa usa pod nako ka anak. Dapat ipahibaw ug sayo ang pagpatawag ug meeting kay para maka pangandam mi kay magaid baya mi sa panginabuhay.”

“Sometimes mam we can't attend school functions because of meetings that are called by another school of my other children, it would be better to inform us in advance so we can plan because we are tied up with our work schedules.

One parent further said that,

“Kinahanglan dunay plano in advance para dunay insaktong oras ipangandam”

“There should have a plan in advance, so we have enough time to prepare.”

Theme 5: Providing opportunities and direction for involvement

“Mao sad tingali hinungdan mam nga diotay nalang nga ginikanan ang manambong kay walay klaro nga dinad-an. Mas maayo unta nga adunay hugot nga mangulo sa pagpadagan sa skwelahan. Maglibog man gud mi mam kay dili mo sulti ug unsay mga lihokon o trabahoon, kun binlan lang unta mi.”

“Maybe the reason why parents’ attendance during programs and meetings had declined because there is no comprehensible management system. It would be better if there is strong leadership to manage the school. We are confused because we are not informed on what to do; we do not know how to get involved.

“Diba kaming mga ginikanan katimbang sa pagpadagan sa skwelahan, di ba wala man moy mahimo kun wala ming mga ginikanan? giyahan unta mi unsay mga plano ug unsay mga buhaton.”

“Aren’t we parents your partner in managing the school? You can’t do something without us parents, and we hope that we are informed on the plans and that we know how to get involved.”

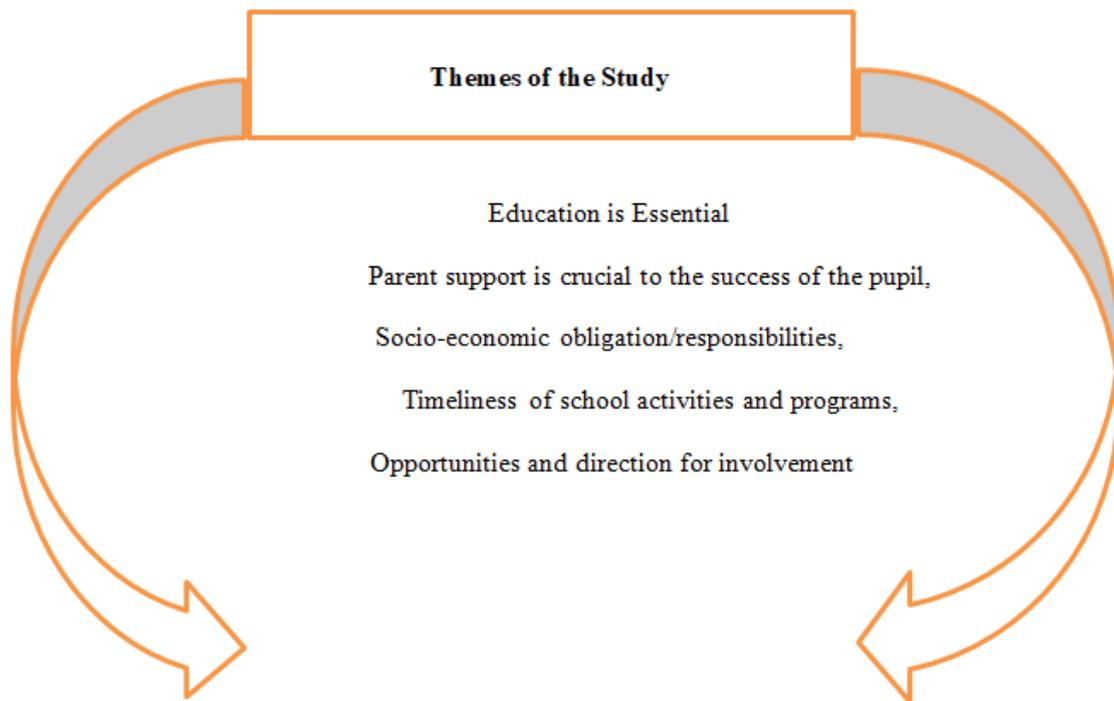


Figure 1. The themes generated from the study

4. Discussion

Parent’s involvement and support of the school programs and activities play a vital role for achieving the school’s vision and mission. Yet, some things hindered the parents from doing. This study provides a fascinating insight that helps teachers and school officials understand their non-involvement in some programs and activities in the school. The first two themes of the study inform us that even if parents are nonparticipative in the program and activities yet, they viewed and acknowledged that education is essential to their children’s lives, thus supporting the success of the children’s program.

Moreover, it is an acknowledgment that any school activity, and program is essential for the growth and development of the child. Thus, it sends a message to the school officials that the willingness and desire to support the school programs and activities is in their hearts and mind. This finding support Yoder & Lopez (2013) that parents are hopeful about engaging in education but often fail to become actively involved because they feel marginalized.

The third theme of the study, socio-economic responsibility, informs us that earning a living, performing household chores, and attending other social obligations leading the parents to missed school programs and activities of their children. It suggests that parents of the pupils in the public schools have many things to do in

Programs and Activities in a Rural Primary school in the Philippines: A Qualitative Inquiry on Parents' Perspective

life. One of that is prioritizing to their job so that they provide and sustain family financial expenses. Moreover, it signifies that the mother needs to have additional income in the family. It concurs. It confirms the finding of Harris & Goodall (2008) that social and economic factors still prevent many parents from fully participating in schooling. Moreover, Akif Erdener & Knoepfel's (2018) study showed that family income the most significant factor in parental involvement in education.

While the fourth theme of the study is about the timeliness of school programs and activities, it informs us that timely communication of the scheduled programs and activities is vital to the participation or attendance of the parents. It suggests that teachers and other school officials should send the parents the earliest possible time to budget and schedule their daily and weekly itinerary. Furthermore, it implies that the school has to establish an excellent info-notice system that will send faster information to the parents for any school-related activities. This finding concurs to Baker, Wise, Kelly, & Skiba (2016) that parents noted that they found out about events too late to arrange their schedule to catch up on school programs and activities. It also collaborates the finding of Can (2016) that parents view the need to use the mobile application because it has been proven to help and relay exact information right away about a school-related function.

The fifth theme is opportunities and direction for involvement in the school programs and activities. It means parents have a hard time understanding and getting the significance of the meetings and activities in the school. It implies that the activities and programs are not beneficial to them, which means their attendance/presence has no meaning. Thus, a more definite and clear purpose should be emphasized and let them feel that their suggestions and opinions are essential. In addition, the school should empower the parents in the programs and activities. The finding is aligned with Zaoura & Aubrey (2011) that current home-school relationships were limited to parents' meetings and routine communication with teachers. Mannathoko & Mangope (2013) said that parents in the rural and remote areas were only called to collect the reports card, attend parents- teachers' meetings, or be threatened about failing to pay school development and sports fees. It also compels Hasnat (2016) finding that parents are not comfortable approaching the school, and many parents do not consider their role encompassing parental involvement in their children's education.

5. Conclusion

Parents in the rural state-run primary school understand that education is essential to the life of the children and their support to the school programs and activities are crucial to their success as well to the school. However, poor communication between parents and school personnel affects its participation. In like manner, the parents' means of living and other social responsibilities hinder them from fully participating, and the school shall provide the opportunity to engage with the parents to understand the program entirely. It suggests that the school needs to empower parents to become more actively in the school and their children's education. Thus, this study recommends that the school implement a culturally based program consisting of the reward system, the livelihood program, the responsible parenthood program, and the alternative learning system program.

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