

Parental Engagement in Children's Online Learning: Views, Practices, and Experiences

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Abstract: Young children are currently thrust into the world of online learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of this, the researchers thought of discovering how parents viewed their own roles in online learning, as well as how these views, practices and experiences affected the way they engaged with their children's schooling. Regardless of teaching modality, teachers guide students when they need help in understanding certain concepts or when performing tasks. This time, when activities are done through video call meetings, teachers are not the only ones helping students in their online learning. Parents and guardians are now engaged in their children's learning and are able to help them cope with the new normal. Twelve surveys and eight interviews were conducted with parents from a progressive school in Quezon City to gather and analyze the views, practices and experiences of parents on their engagement with their children's online learning. Findings reveal that parents are more engaged in communicating with the teachers and the school, rather than collaborating with the school community and engaging in decision making with them. In addition to this, the researchers discovered that the majority of the parents are very active in guiding and helping their children. Despite the benefits, they also witnessed challenges, and the most common one that they have is time management. Overall, the parents also view parental engagement as necessary and beneficial to their children's online learning. Thus, they actively engage with their children and improve their parent-child relationship.

Key Words: parental engagement; online learning; children; views; practices; experiences

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context

Susanna Loeb (2020) claimed that students have the tendency to struggle during online classes as they get distracted easily and teachers cannot oversee what they are doing behind the screens. The researchers believe that parents' positive views of online learning would translate into how they engage with their children's online educational activities. To that end, the researchers analyzed how parents viewed their roles with respect to their children's online learning. They also acquired these parents' experiences in online learning and the benefits and challenges they faced during the process. A number of their children are also in the pre-nursery, nursery 1, nursery 2 and kindergarten levels of a private progressive school in Quezon City.

1.2 Problem Statement

The study aims to view how parental engagement is employed during online learning of young children. The researchers would like to answer the following questions:

1. How is parental engagement perceived during children's online learning?
 - a. Collaborating with the community
 - b. Communication
 - c. Engagement between teachers and parents in decision making
2. What practices, experiences, benefits, and challenges for the children's learning do parents experience?

It is believed that if the parents have positive views regarding their engagement in their children's online learning, then they are more receptive to being engaged in online classes, and thus, receive numerous benefits.

1.3 Review of Related Literature

1.3.1 Parental Engagement

According to Gross et al. (2020), parental engagement in early learning is defined as a shared responsibility between the school and parents. Along with this, Joyce Epstein (1997) presents a framework, detailing six types of involvement: parenting, volunteering, learning at home, communicating, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. The first three types are not used in this study, except the subsequent three.

1. *Collaborating with the community* is defined as integrating both the resources and services to strengthen parent-student relationships, together with the school programs, to create an increase of skills, creativity and openness to various opportunities.
2. *Communication* provides an effective structure to link both school-home and home-school¹ collaborations regarding the child's progress.
3. *Decision making* is defined as the inclusion of parents in the school decision-making process, as well as developing parent and leader representatives.

For Smith et al. (2016), participation and collaboration between parents and professionals create a positive significant relationship in students' online learning. Duraku and Hoxha (2020) saw positive outcomes in relation to the engagement of parents in online learning if they are knowledgeable about technology. Parental engagement would also focus on the roles of parents as they would be actively taking part in their child's education and upbringing (Gross et al., 2020).

1.3.2 Parental Engagement: Views, Practices, Experiences

Hartas (2008) focused on the practices of parental involvement where he conducted a structured

¹ According to Kuusimäki et al. (2019), school-home collaborations consist of teachers initiating the communications with parents, via online meetings, phone calls, e-mails and text messages.

interview with a parent about the practices and routines during the learning process. This study also added interactions done to be involved as a parent in helping their child throughout their behavioral and attitudinal development. It was evident that parental monitoring practices play a vital role in their children's lives. Bhamani, et al. (2020)'s results show that there are strengths in relation to parental participation and being active. It was found that parents have shifted their learning challenges and gaps easily and address them at an early phase. In terms of the experiences, it was mentioned that parents are utilizing online resources for home-based learning. Another would be having a routine for learning wherein parents are able to adapt together with their children for an effective learning environment (Bhamani, et al., 2020). Rabab Zahidi (2018) also defines self-reporting as an assessment which recognizes the levels of parental knowledge in terms of their attitudes, behaviors and practices. There are various articles that define the specific aspects of online learning.

1.3.3 Benefits of Parental Engagement

Parental engagement promotes a healthy relationship between parent and child (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Hakyemez-Paul et al., 2018). Furthermore, O'Toole, et al. (2019) found a positive effect for parental engagement in the lives of children as these enhance proximal academic-related results, behavior and mood during schoolwork activities and build healthy communication between child and parent. Engaged parents produce a positive effect in a child's early years, as they support children's academic performance and help children develop holistically. (G. Sapungan & R. Sapungan, 2014). Parental support during the primary years improves the child's learning and development, and social competence, which can lead to successful learning (Ntekane, 2018).

According to McNeal Jr (2014), parent-school practices affect the academic performance of students in relation to their academic achievement, attitudinal and behavioral aspects. Factors such as time, resources and awareness are needed for parents to be able to immerse themselves in the learning environment of students (Makarewicz, 2018). In relation to this, private tutoring can influence a child's learning and development with the proper guidance of parental engagement (Urhahne, 2019).

Majority of these studies mentioned here are for face to face instruction before the pandemic. Given that online learning is quite new, there is scanty information available regarding the benefits of parental engagement in the online platform. This is the

primary gap being addressed by this particular research.

1.3.4 Challenges of Parental Engagement During Online Learning

Parental engagement plays a crucial role in the learning of young children, even though there are challenges that they face during this pandemic. Research has shown that one of the challenges parents face is participating in their children's development, due to time constraints and resource obligations (Mahuro & Hungi, 2016). Based on the results of the paper, all of the parents saw time management as a challenge in their engagement. Parents were also challenged during this time of the pandemic, due to the needed materials, resources and being aware of the technological innovations (Dawadi et al., 2020). It is evident that there were drastic changes that had happened in learning modalities, which led teachers and parents to adjust their views in education and accept technological advancements (Dhawan, 2020). A study stated that it is important to understand the relationship between students and technology in readiness and support, which can result in quality education. The researchers also mentioned that monitoring children throughout their lessons and school work, while communicating with teachers, is a concern for parents (Duraku & Hoxha, 2020).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Conceptual Framework

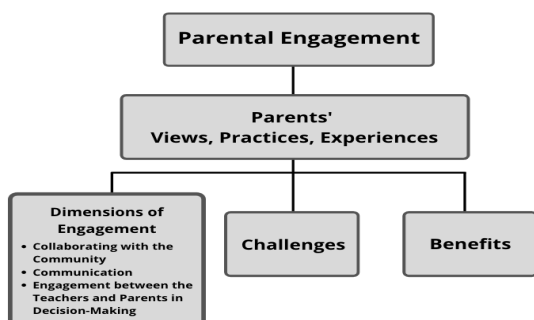


Fig. 1. Parental engagement in children's online learning

This conceptual framework depicts parental engagement, based on Gross et al. (2020)'s study and

three of Epstein's (1997) dimensions of parental engagement. But the researchers believe that parental engagement is reflected in the parents' own views, practices and experiences as outlined in three of Epstein (1997)'s dimensions: (1) collaborating with the community, (2) communication and (3) engagement between the teachers and parents in decision-making. Following the chosen dimensions of parental engagement, the parents' views, practices and experiences also revealed the benefits and challenges encountered during their children's online learning.

Based on the related literature, the researchers believe that when parents view their roles in online learning in a positive light, they invariably become more engaged. Thus, they reap benefits that may include a healthier parent-child relationship, the children's academic improvement, increased motivation and behavior in activities. Even as parents faced various challenges during their engagement in their children's online learning – difficulty managing their time (which is true for working parents), difficulties in monitoring their children's needs, in connecting to the Internet and their lack of resources – a number of the parents in the interviews believe that despite these, their children are receiving quality education.

2.2 Data Gathering Procedure

After granting their permission, 12 parents of young children from a private school in Quezon City responded to a 26-question survey that sought their views, practices and experiences as they engaged in their children's online learning. A number of the survey questions were derived from the framework of Epstein (1997). The survey also asked their views on the perceived benefits and challenges they experienced during the process. Out of the 12, eight parents were interviewed singly and in groups. Twelve questions regarding their opinions of parental engagement were asked. Likewise, the interview pursued their experiences with parental engagement during the face-to-face and online setup, the benefits and challenges and their opinions on the quality of their children's education.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers gathered information from the survey questionnaires and interviews and tabulated the result into three figures.

Table 1. The mean of parental engagement

LEGEND

Mean	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Frequently
4.00 - 5.00					Frequently (Very High Parental Engagement)
3.00 - 3.99					Often (High Parental Engagement)
2.00 - 2.99					Sometimes (Moderate Parental Engagement)
1.00 - 1.99					Rarely (Low Parental Engagement)
0.00 - 0.99					Never (No Parental Engagement)
Communication	0.00	0.33	2.67	4.67	4.00
Collaborating with the community	0.25	1.75	4.25	3.50	2.25
Decision Making	4.50	3.00	2.00	1.50	1.00

A high mean of 4.67 for “*Often*” in Table 1 in communication indicates that the parents are very engaged in the children’s online learning. To illustrate communications, parents are open to asking teachers for accommodations even during school hours. Parent MD (2020, December 4) asked a teacher if she could set dates for one-on-one sessions with her daughter, to help her transition to online learning. This bears out the research of O’Toole et al. (2019), that personal engagement can result in building healthy communication between child and parent and positive effect on academic achievement.

For collaborating with the community, the majority of the parents answered “*Sometimes*” in the survey questionnaire. This gives a mean of 4.25, indicating that they exhibited moderate parental engagement. An example of this is when Parent SR and Parent NL (2020, November 27) mentioned attending seminars sponsored by the school and in

their workplaces. However, none of the other parents in the interviews mentioned services provided by the school.

For the decision making dimension, many parents answered “*Never*”, giving a mean of 4.50. This indicates that there is little to no engagement in the aspect of decision making. In this dimension, Parent JS (2020, November 27) indicated that she attended parent-teacher conferences (PTCs) and parenting workshops offered by the school on different topics on parenting and other academic-related topics, but she did not indicate that she brought up her concerns in said conferences. Unfortunately, the researchers failed to ask the parents regarding how they made decisions with the teachers and the school in the interviews.

Table 2. Benefits of parental engagement

Benefits of Parental Engagement (Children)	Responses per category
Healthier relationship	9
Improvement in academic performance	6
Motivated to work in asynchronous activities	8
Exhibited excellent behavior in synchronous classes	5
Became active in synchronous activities	8
Parents are more active in helping their children	11

Table 2 represents the responses of all 12 parents in a “Check All That Apply” question. This also indicates the number of responses per category. It exhibits the various benefits parents have observed in their children’s online learning experience. Majority of these parents agree that they are more active in helping their children in their online learning. To support this, Parent MO (2020, November 27), shared that during this time, he said that helps them understand lessons during online class. He said that if his child does not understand a concept, he and his wife explain the concepts in a much easier way.

Table 3. Challenges of parental engagement

Challenges of Parental Engagement	Responses per category
Lack of resources	2
Time management	12
Monitoring children's needs	9
Communicating with teachers	3
Commitment	3
Lack of awareness of technological innovations	3
Transition from traditional to online learning	5
Internet Connection	1

Table 3 shows the responses to each category of a "Check All That Apply" question in the survey. It is intriguing to see that all the parents have time-management issues when engaging with their children online. Smith et al. (2016) stated that time constraints are potential obstacles that children and parents will face in the virtual learning environment. Along with the responsibilities that schools will face, are the unclear role of parents and conflicts between parents and their children.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, parental engagement correlates to their child's performance in online learning. It is also reported that the majority of the parents are more engaged when it comes to communicating with the school in their children's online learning, compared to collaborating with the community and decision-making with the teachers and parents, where they have moderate to no parental engagement. The parents also provided their views, practices and experiences about the benefits and challenges they received during their children's online learning. The researchers also learned that the majority of parents became more active in helping their children. They also witnessed that they have developed a healthier relationship with their children and they are more engaged in synchronous and asynchronous activities. They also admitted that they

struggle with time management. But these parents stated in the interviews that they also have certain practices to help engage with their children in their online learning. Given these findings, the researchers also learned that the parents believe that their children are receiving quality education, which can be reflected in their positive views on online learning and their engagement.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researchers would like to thank their mentor, panelists, thesis professor, practicum coordinator, the private school directress and the parents who helped them write this study.

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